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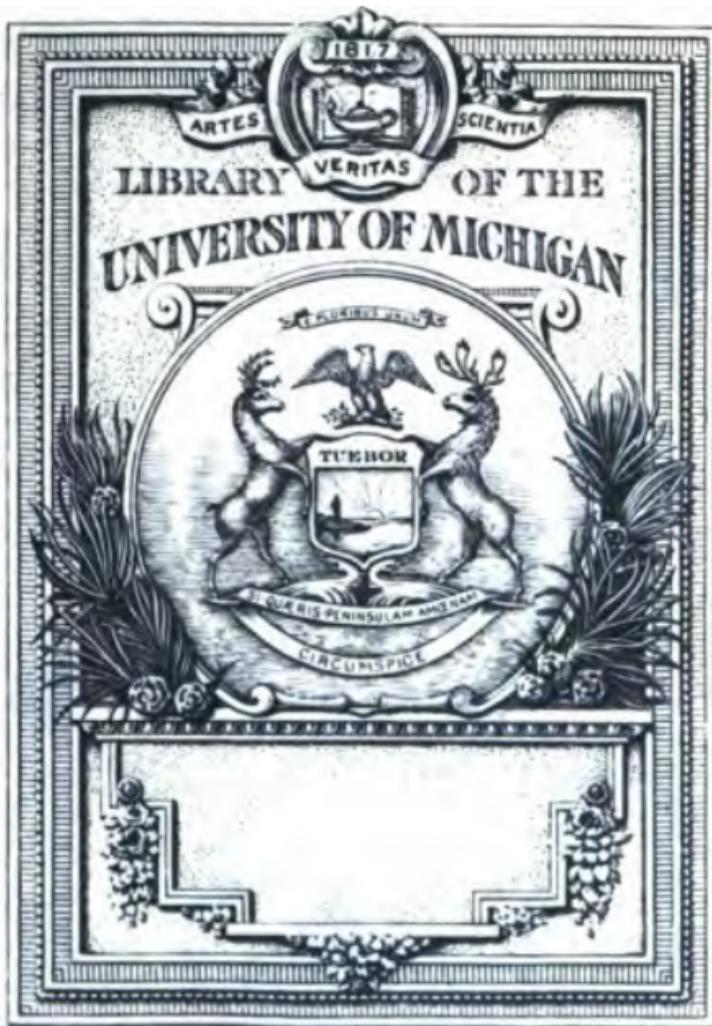
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ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.

No. XVII.

THE

LOOM AND THE LUGGER.

PART I.

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BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1883.

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THE
LOOM AND THE LUGGER.

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THE
LOOM AND THE LUGGER.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

TAKING AN ORDER.

MR. CULVER, the silk-manufacturer, arrived at home later than the usual dinner hour, one dark winter day. He had been attending a meeting at the Mansion-house, held on the behalf of the Spitalfields weavers, whose deplorable distress in the middle of the season caused fearful anticipations of what their condition might be before a warmer season and a brisker state of trade should arrive. Mr. Culver's thoughts were occupied, during his slow and sad walk from the Mansion-house to his abode in the neighbourhood of Devonshire-square, by doubts whether a time of activity would ever arrive; or, if it did, how long it would last. Year after year, since he had entered business, had he been flattered with hopes that permanent prosperity would come; that the ladies of England would continue to prize silk fabrics as the most beautiful material for dress; and would grow conscientious enough to refuse smuggled goods, when every conceivable

variety could be had from the looms of their own country. These had been Mr. Culver's hopes till of late. Now he began almost to despair, and to acknowledge himself tired out by the alternate perverseness of customers and workmen. As soon as a new fashion was fairly established, and orders abounded, there was sure to follow a strike among the men for wages ; they invariably urging that a protected manufacture must be able to yield good wages to the operatives employed in it. As soon as their demands were yielded to, and the price of goods therefore enhanced, the market was deluged with smuggled silks ; and while traffic was busy in the shops, the manufacturer was left to sigh over his ruinous stock when the fashion of the season had passed away. Being thus the sport, as he said, of three parties,—the encroaching weavers, the capricious public, and the smuggling shopkeepers,—the manufacturer declared that he stood no chance of prosperity, however ready the taxed millions of his countrymen might be to tell him that they were made to suffer that he might flourish, and that he had no right to complain while so many paid for the protection granted to his manufacture. Mr. Culver found it difficult to be grateful for the vaunted protection which did him no good ; and was strongly disposed to resign the favour and his business together. He wished he had done it ten years before, when he might have withdrawn from the manufacture a richer man than now. At present, all the manufactures of the kingdom were in so depressed a

state that there was little encouragement to invest his remaining capital in any other concern ; and it would, if unemployed, barely suffice for the maintenance of his family—his motherless young family—whose interests depended on himself alone. His chief doubt about leaving off business immediately arose from something that he had heard at the Mansion-house this day, in confirmation of rumours previously afloat,—that it was the intention of government to introduce some important changes into the silk-trade,—to authorize a restricted importation of foreign silks. The rumour had created a prodigious outcry at the meeting, and caused such a contest between certain shopkeepers and manufacturers, such a splitting into two parties, as made it seem probable that the interests of the starving weavers—the objects of the meeting—would be forgotten between them. Mr. Culver was one who wished for the removal of the existing prohibition, seeing and feeling as he did that nothing could be worse than the present state of the trade in England, and believing that the rage for foreign fabrics might subside when they could be easily had, and that it must be a good thing to try a new footing for a manufacture which was at present carried on to the injury of all the parties concerned. If he continued to manufacture, it would be with the hope of this change ; but he ended with a doubt whether he ought to play the speculator much longer, and whether there was not something in the nature of the business which would for ever prevent its being in a permanently flourishing state.

When he approached his own house, he saw his girls looking over the blind, as if waiting for him ; and, in the background, nurse's high cap, always white, as if by miracle, considering the locality.

" O, papa !" cried Charlotte, " we thought you never would have come."

" I dare say dinner will be overdone, my dear ; but never mind. If cook is not vexed, I shall not care."

" But the Bremes' footboy has brought a note for you ; and he has called twice since for an answer ; and he was obliged to go home without one, after all."

" Such an ugly footboy, papa !" observed Lucy. " Nurse says that when they set up a footboy, they might as well have got one that had not a snub nose just like his master's."

" And such a ridiculous livery, papa ! It is so odd to see such a little fellow with knee-breeches, and with buttons on his big coat as large as my doll's saucers ! Nurse says——"

" Hold your tongue, my dear. I want to read this note ; and when we go to dinner, I have something to talk to you about that signifies more than Mr. Breme's footboy's coat-buttons."

While the note was being read, nurse, who was a privileged person, did not leave the room, but muttered her wonder where the change came from that made shopkeepers now so different from what shopkeepers used to be. She remembered the time when the Bremes would no more have thought of having a footboy than of living in the king's palace. And if shopkeepers' chil-

dren learned to dance in her young days, they were satisfied with plain white frocks, instead of flaunting in silks and gauze ribbons, like the Miss Bremes. There lay the secret, however. It was of the silks that all the rest came. Every body knew that the Bremes lived by breaking the laws ;—that old Breme's shop in town, and his son's at Brighton, were full of unlawful goods.

“ And so they will be, nurse,” said her master, “ as long as the great folks at court, and all the fine ladies who imitate them, buy French goods as fast as they can be smuggled.—Charlotte, see if dinner is coming. I am in a hurry. I have to go out again directly.”

“ O, papa!” said Lucy, “ I thought you had something very particular to tell us ; and now you say you are going out directly.”

“ It must do when I come back to-night, or in the morning. It is nothing very entertaining ; but almost anything is better worth telling than all the faults you have to find with what the Bremes say and do. How can it possibly signify to you and me whether their footboy has a snub nose or a sharp one ?”

“ No, but, papa, it is such a very wicked thing of Mr. Breme to smuggle half the things in his shop, when the poor weavers close by are starving, and he knows it. Nurse says—O, here is the boiled beef ! but I can go on telling you while you are helping the others. Nurse says—”

“ Nurse,” said Mr. Culver, “ it is a pity you

should stay to cut the child's food. Charlotte will attend to her."

Nurse unwillingly withdrew. Perhaps she would have attempted to stand her ground, if she had known what her master was planning against her. He was at this moment thinking that he must, by some means, put a stop to all this gossip about their neighbours; gossip which, in the case of the Bremes, was strongly tinctured with the malice which it was once thought nurse Nicholas could not bear towards any human being. It would be difficult, he feared, to separate nurse in any degree from those whom she would always consider her charge, even if she should live to see them all grown up; but her influence must be lessened, if he did not mean the girls to grow up the greatest gossips in the neighbourhood. He thought that the return of their brothers from school in the approaching holydays (brothers both older than Charlotte, the eldest girl) would afford a good opportunity for breaking the habit of nurse being in the parlour all day long during his absence. He now began the change by sending her away before dinner, instead of immediately after.

"Old Short has been telling nurse," continued Lucy,—"you know old Short, papa?"

"My dear, he used to weave for me before you were born."

"Well; old Short tells nurse that there is not a loom at work in all Crispin-street, nor has been all this month, while silk pelisses are more the fashion than ever they were. The Bremes had

such beautiful pelisses last Sunday at church ! You saw them, papa ?"

" Not I, my dear. I do not go to church to look at people's pelisses."

" O, well ! they are made Paris fashion ; and of French silk too. Your silks are not good enough for such high and mighty young ladies, nurse says."

" There will soon be an end of that," observed Charlotte, who attributed her father's gravity to the fact of his manufacture being slighted. " There will soon be an end of all that ; and nurse's son is going to help to put an end to it."

" Yes, papa," cried Lucy. " Only think ! He is going into the Pretence-Service."

" La, Lucy ! you mean the Preventive Service," cried Charlotte.

" To *prevent* prohibited goods being brought on shore ; to *prevent* smugglers' boats from landing. Now you will understand, Lucy, what the Preventive Service means. So Nicholas is to be one of the Coast Guard ! I suppose nurse is pleased."

" I hardly know," replied Charlotte. " He says it is very hard service in these times ; and I believe she thinks her son fit to be an admiral. He has to guard the Sussex coast ; and nurse says there are more smugglers there than anywhere."

Lucy was of opinion that he should have somebody to help him. He could hardly manage, she thought, to prevent boats landing, if several chose to come together. He must be a very brave

man indeed, she thought, to judge by what had been given him to do. No wonder nurse was proud of him! Nicholas sank much in her estimation when she heard that he was not alone to guard the whole Sussex coast, but had companions within sight by day, and within hail by night.

"But do they all earn wages, like Nicholas?" inquired Lucy. "They pay him wages, besides letting him have his pension still, that was given him for being wounded in a battle. I wish old Short, and some of the other poor people he was telling nurse about, could be made guards too. But who pays them?"

"Who do you think pays them? Try and find out."

Charlotte thought that her father and the other manufacturers were the most likely people to pay for the prevention of smuggling, especially as some shopkeepers and the public had no objection to smuggling. But when she remembered how many guards there must be, if they were in sight of one another all along the coast where smuggling went on, she began to think that it must be an expense which would be hardly worth the manufacturers' while. Lucy supposed that if each manufacturer kept one, it might be easily managed. She asked which would cost most,—a Preventive servant or a footboy?

"You think, I suppose," said her father, "that as the Preventive men do not prevent smuggling, after all, we might as well have a footboy, and be as grand as the Bremes. But, do you know,

Lucy, I think the Bremes would have much more reason to laugh at us then, than you have now for ridiculing them. I believe Mr. Breme is growing rich ; and he must know very well that I am growing poor."

Charlotte asked again about the Coast Guard. She would have been pleased just now to learn that her father had any kind of man-servant in his pay, besides those in the warehouse of whom she knew already. When, however, she was told the annual expense of keeping a guard against smugglers on the coast and at sea, she believed that the cost was beyond the means of all the manufacturers together that she had ever heard of. It was above four hundred thousand pounds a-year,—a sum of which she could as little realize the idea as of so many millions.

" Yes, my dear," said her father, " four hundred thousand pounds are paid every year for *not* preventing smuggling ; for we see that smuggling still goes on."

" How can it be ?" asked Lucy. " Do the men go to sleep, so that they do not see the boats coming ? Or are they lazy ? or are they cowardly ? I do not think there will be any more smuggling in Sussex, now that Nicholas is there."

Her father laughed, and told her it would require a much greater man than Nicholas to put a stop to smuggling in Sussex ; and that if the Coast Guard could keep their eyes wide open all the twenty-four hours round, and were as active as race-horses, and as brave as lions, they could

not prevent smuggling, as long as people liked French goods better than English; and that such would be people's taste as long as French goods were to be had better for the same money than any that were made in England.

Why the English should be so foolish as to make their fabrics less good and less cheap than the French, Mr. Culver could not now stay to explain. He despatched his cheese, tossed off his port, recommended the girls to learn as much as they pleased from nurse about the Preventive Service, and as little as they could about the Bremes' misdeeds, and was off, to see the very man against whom nurse's eloquent tongue had been employed.

Mr. Bremes appeared to have something of consequence to display to Mr. Culver, as he turned on the gas in his back-room to an unusual brightness when his friend entered. (They still called themselves friends, though provocations were daily arising in matters of business which impaired their good will, and threatened to substitute downright enmity for it in time.)

"Here, my dear sir," said Bremes; "just look ——but I wish you had come by daylight: you can't conceive the lustre by daylight;—just look at this piece of goods, and tell me if you ever manufactured anything like it."

Mr. Culver unrolled one end of the piece of silk, ran his finger-tips over the surface, furled and unfurled its breadth, contemplated its pattern, and acknowledged that it was a very superior fabric indeed. He had hardly ever seen

such an one from the Lyons looms, and he was sure neither Macclesfield nor Spitalfields had produced it.

"Can Spitalfields produce such an one, or one nearly resembling it?" asked Breme. "That is the question I wanted to ask you, my dear sir. Bring me a specimen which shall pass for French, and you shall have a larger order than has left this house for a twelvemonth past;—provided always that you can furnish it without delay."

There need be no delay, Culver answered; for there were more looms unemployed in Spitalfields than could be set to work by any order that a single house could give. But the inferiority of the British manufacture was the impediment;—an inferiority which seemed almost hopeless. There was not a child of ten years old, dressing her doll in her mamma's odds and ends of silk, that could not tell French from English at a glance. Ay; put her into a dark room, and she would know the difference by the feel.

"You should get rid of this inferiority, my dear sir," said Breme, with an encouraging smile, "and then we shall be most happy to deal exclusively with you. We prefer dealing with neighbours, *ceteris paribus*, I assure you. You should get rid of this inferiority, and then—"

"Get rid of it! I should like to know how, while our weavers insist on the wages which they fancy can be spared from a protected trade, and will not believe that their prosperity has anything to do with the quality of their work. As long as

they fancy their manufacture by law established, they will take no pains to improve it. There is no stimulus to improvement like fair competition."

" Well ! your men's wages will soon be no longer by law established ; that will be one step gained. You will then compete with Macclesfield and Paisley, which you could not do while your Spitalfields Act was in force. Bestir yourselves, I advise you, or the foreigners will cut you out in every way."

" I shall bestir myself to get our protection removed," observed Culver. " This is our only hope : but in this endeavour you will not join me, Breme. Contraband goods have too many charms for your customers, and bring too much profit to you, to allow you to wish that the trade should be open. Beware, however, that you are not caught some day."

Breme begged to be trusted to take care of himself. As to his fondness for a stock of contraband goods, he would just mention, in confidence, a circumstance which would prove his disposition to encourage the home manufacture.

" When I was last in Paris," said he, " a manufacturer there offered to supply me with any quantity of silk goods, to be deposited in any part of London that I might point out, upon the payment of an insurance of ten per cent. This tempting offer I declined, sir."

" Because you knew you could as easily get the goods without paying the insurance. Very meritorious, indeed, Mr. Breme ! However, I

am not one to talk about the patriotism, and the loyalty, and all that, involved in the case: for I hold the frequent and unpunished breach of a law to be a sufficient proof that the law is a bad one; and that the true social duty in such transactions is to buy where things are cheapest, and sell where they are dearest; thus relieving those who want to sell, and accommodating those who wish to buy. I am not going to quarrel with you, sir, for buying your silks abroad, if you will only join hands in getting your neighbours freed for a fair competition with France."

"Very liberal, indeed, my dear sir! Very handsome, indeed! It will give me great pleasure if you can accept the order which I have just given you a hint of. By the way, were you at the last India sale?"

"Of course."

"How did the bandanas go?"

"You probably know as well as I. I am no exporter of bandanas."

"Do you mean to insinuate that I am? Retail dealers have something else to do, I assure you."

"O yes;—to sell them when they come back again. But you must know how they are disposed of at the India House, and how much it costs to carry them over to Guernsey, and bring them in again, in spite of the Pretence Service (as my little girl calls it), before you can tell whether to sell them at seven or eight shillings apiece in your back shop."

"Upon my word, sir, you are very wise," said Breme, laughing.

"One learns such wisdom at a dear cost," replied Culver. "Let me see. About 1,000,000 bandanas have been sold at the India House this year, at four shillings apiece. Of these, full 800,000 come back to be sold at seven or eight shillings each; so that the users of bandanas pay a bounty of 800,000 times three shillings a-year to speculators and smugglers, besides their share of the expense of the Blockade and Coast Guard which is employed to prevent their getting their handkerchiefs. It is a beautiful system, truly!"

"Let it work quietly, till those concerned begin to see into it," replied Breme. "You ought not to complain, you know. It is all done to protect your craft."

"If government would please to protect the consumers' money," observed Culver, "they would have more to spend on the produce of my looms. All I ask is that the people's purses may be protected, and we manufacturers left to take care of ourselves. Government has been so long killing us with kindness that I doubt whether we shall ever get over it. However, cut me a pattern of your silk, and I will consult with my cleverest workman, and let you know what we can do."

"Certainly:—that is,—I am sure I may trust your honour."

"My interest, if not my honour. You must know very well that our books are not so full of orders just now as to make us willing to throw a chance one into other hands."

"True, true! But a rival house—"

" Will not interfere with you while you agree to fair terms. I will be off to my *factotum*, as I call him, in my business matters. I hope Mrs. Breme is well, and the young ladies ? "

" The children are well enough ; but my wife has not got over the autumn fogs yet. She would not be persuaded to leave Brighton till the royal party had removed ; and the consequence is just what I expected. Her chest is so delicate that I doubt whether she will get across the doors this winter. It is really a very animated, an extremely fascinating scene, you know, when the royal household are at hand. Your young folks are flourishing, I hope ? "

" Quite so. Good evening. My best respects to your lady."

" Good evening. O, Mr. Culver, just one thing more ! You said something about your stock. Have you a good assortment that one might select a few pieces from,—of grave colours, —at moderate prices ? "

" O yes. Will you come and see ? "

" I think I will," replied Breme, looking round for his hat. " And a good many blacks ? "

" Of course ; but you had better view them by daylight. You are not thinking of choosing colours to-night ? "

" Certainly ; but I can examine your prices, and bring home a piece or two of blacks. Here, Smith ! Send Johnson after me directly to Mr. Culver's warehouse with his bag. As to these bandanas, Mr. Culver——"

Culver turned quick round upon him with the question,

“ Is the King dead ?”

“ Lord bless my soul, what an idea ! His Majesty dead ! No, not that I have heard ; nor even ill, for anything I know.”

Mr. Culver was not quite satisfied ; so remarkable was Breme’s method of inquiring after his stock of blacks—at the tail of their conversation, and yet with an evident design of immediately possessing himself of some pieces. He was not altogether mistaken. Breme had received private intelligence of the inevitable occurrence of a slight general mourning, and was anxious to have his assortment of black silks ready at once, and the fabric in imitation of his French pattern prepared against the expiration of the short mourning.

Culver was enough on his guard to avoid selling any of his stock quite so low as he might have done if no suspicion had crossed him. When the transaction was concluded, he stepped into Crispin-street, to consult the best skilled of his workmen on the matter of the new order.

CHAPTER II.

GIVING AN ORDER.

MR. CULVER was not unaccustomed to visit his work-people in their abodes, and knew very well what sights to expect on opening the door ; but he had never chanced to look in upon any one

of them on an evening of January,—a dull month for trade, and almost the dreariest as to weather. He did not anticipate much that was comfortless in the aspect of Cooper's abode ; for Cooper was so good a workman as to be always employed while any business at all was doing. His wife was a more tidy body than many weavers are blessed with ; and her baby was far from resembling the miserable little creatures who may be seen in any street in London, with peaked chins, blue lips, and red noses, their ribs bent in with uncouth nursing, and legs bowed from having been made untimely to bear the weight of the swollen body. Mrs. Cooper's baby smiled a smile that was not ghastly, and danced in its father's arms when he had time to play with it, instead of wearing his heart with its cries when he should be sleeping the sleep which follows a day of hard labour.

Knowing all this, Mr. Culver was rather surprised by the first view of Cooper's apartment this night. Its atmosphere was apparently made up of the remains of the orange fog of the morning, the smoke from the chimney which could not make its way into the upper air, that which proceeded from the pipe of the old man who cowered over the dull fire, and that which curled magnificently from the dipped candles on either side the loom :—which candles seemed to yield one-tenth part light, and the rest to be made up of yellow tallow, wick growing into perpetual cauliflowers, and smoke. The loom was going, with its eternal smack and tick, serving, in co-

operation with the gap under the door, for as admirable a ventilator as could have been wished for on the hottest day in August. Mrs. Cooper was discharging many offices in her own person ; being engaged now in snuffing the rapidly-wasting candles, now in giving a fresh impulse to the rocking cradle, but chiefly in tying the threads of her husband's work, while he was intent, with foot, hands, and eye, on the complicated operations of his craft.

It seemed a somewhat unequal division of labour that these two should have so many tasks upon their hands, while a third was sitting lazily smoking by the fire, who might as well have been tending the baby. But old Short had another occupation, which was vastly important in his own eyes, although it would sometimes have been gladly dispensed with by everybody about him. Old Short was always grumbling. This being an avocation that he had ever found time for in his busiest days, it was not to be supposed that he would neglect it now that he had nothing else to do ; and accordingly his voice of complaint arose in all the intervals of Cooper's loom music, and formed a perpetual accompaniment to its softer sounds.

It was matter of some surprise to Mr. Culver, who believed that Cooper and his wife were justified in living comfortably if they chose, that they should continue to give a place at their fireside to a cross old man, to whom they were bound neither by relationship nor friendship. On the present occasion, his first remark, offered in an under-tone, was,

"So you have the old gentleman with you still! He does not grow more pleased with the times, I suppose?"

Cooper winked, and his wife smiled.

"Have you any expectations from him? Or what can induce you to give him house-room? He is very well able to take care of himself, as far as I see."

"Very well, indeed, sir. He is as capable, as to his work, as ever, when he gets any: and it is trying sometimes to hear him talk; but he is not the only person to feel the hardship of the times, sir; and one must put up with a fault or two, for the sake of having a respectable lodger."

"He pays us fairly the little we ask for his share of our fire and our meals," observed the wife; "and we are getting used to that tone of his by degrees;—except, indeed, the baby. One would think baby knew what Short was talking about by its fidgeting and crying when he begins on a fresh complaint."

Short was all this time listening to himself too intently to be aware what was said on the other side of the room. He missed Mr. Culver's expression of concern at Cooper's being obliged to add to his resources by having a boarder, but was roused by the exhibition of the pattern of French silk. He felt too much contempt for it, however, to look closely at it, when he heard what it was. He supposed it was one of the new-fangled fashions people had taken to since the Spitalfields weavers had had their just wages held back from them. He had said what would

happen when his brother weavers consented to take less wages than the Act gave them. The manufacture deserved to go down—

“ I am quite of your opinion,” observed Mr. Culver. “ We deserve to go down if we do not mend our methods. Look at the lustre of this pattern, and only feel its substance. We deserve not to prosper if we do not improve our fabrics, with such an example as this before us of what may be done.”

“ Leave the French to mind their own matters,” replied the old man, “ and let the English wear what is English, as they should.”

“ You will find that rather difficult to manage, friend, if they like the French fabric better.”

“ Never tell me, sir! It is a fancy, and a wicked fancy, that of liking French goods. Why, for wear, there is nothing like our brocades, that there was such a demand for when I was young. There was variety enough, too, in all conscience. There was the double and treble striped, and the strawberry-spotted, and—”

“ O yes, I remember, Mr. Short. The first waistcoat I danced a cotillon in was such a strawberry-spotted thing as you describe. Nothing like it for wear, as you say. Down came my little Lucy in it, the other day, to make us laugh; and, to be sure, the colours are as bright as ever. But then, there is nothing like those brocades for price either.”

Short hated to hear such grumbling about the prices of things as was always to be heard now that the French had got a footing in the coun-

try. In old times, those that could afford to wear silk did not grudge a good price for it.

"Very true; but many more people wear silk now; and they are of a class to whom it is of consequence to pay no more than is necessary."

"Ay; and to please them, you have wrought your web thinner and thinner, till you have made it too thin for even the cheapeners; and now you must learn from the French to give your fabric more substance."

"I am afraid we cannot do that for the same money; hey, Cooper?" said Mr. Culver, watching for the sentence which the weaver should pronounce when he should remove his magnifying glass from his eye, and give judgment on the pattern.

"I think we may do it, sir," pronounced Cooper. "I believe I see the principle of the thing; and I could make a fair imitation, I think. Not with the same body, of course. We cannot afford to put in equal material for the money; but a slighter fabric of the same pattern might sell, I have no doubt."

"If I might put in my word," said Mrs. Cooper, "I should recommend a higher price instead of a slighter fabric. It is more for the substance than the pattern that the French silks are preferred, I have heard say."

"My dear," said her husband, "I cannot pretend to rival a French weaver, if you give me leave to use all the silk that ever passed through a foreigner's loom. That is a point above me. So we had better content ourselves with a like-

ness as to figure and price.—I cannot conceive," he continued, as he turned the pattern over and over, and held it in various lights, "how the foreigners can afford their silks at such a price as to tempt our shopkeepers to the risk of the contraband trade."

"Never tell me!" cried Short again. "You do not really think that the French sell at the rate our shopkeepers say they do! It is all a trick of the people at home, to spite those they have been jealous of so long. They may starve us; but the law will be too strong for them, sooner or later."

"I rather hope that they may be too strong for the law," replied Mr. Culver. "If we can but get the law altered, our day of prosperity may come again. We might have learned by this time that all our hopes of selling our silks abroad are at an end, unless we improve like our neighbours, instead of wrapping ourselves up in the idea that nobody can ever equal us."

"Ay, I suppose it was under the notion that it was a fine thing to export, that we were forbidden to import silks," observed Cooper; "but if they had only let us have a little free conversation with the French about their manufacture, we might by this time have had something as good as they to sell abroad."

"Or if not silks, something instead, which would have been produced out of what we should have saved from our expensive manufacture. If I had but the capital which is wasted in following our inferior methods, what fine things I would

do with it for my family, and, in some sort, for my country!"

"I cannot imagine," Cooper again observed, "how the French afford their goods at the price they do. Whether it is that they have food cheaper, and therefore wages are lower, or whether it is that they have better machinery, I should like to come to a fair trial with them. If we can get upon an equality with them, well and good; there will be buyers at hand for all that we can make. If we cannot compete with them, better know it at once, and turn to something else, than be supplanted by means of a contraband trade, while our masters' money is spent in guarding the coast to no purpose."

"Never tell me!" interposed old Short. "You grumblers always grudge every farthing that is not spent upon yourselves."

"O, yes," replied Cooper, smiling; "we grumblers grudge every half-crown that is laid out on French silks in our neighbourhood; and no wonder, friend."

"It is the Coast Guard I was thinking of," replied the old man. "There is Mrs. Nicholas's son just well settled in the Preventive Service; and now you are for doing away the whole thing. What is to become of the poor lad, I wonder?"

"Cooper will teach him to weave," said Mr. Culver, laughing. "So many more people would wear silks, if we had fair play, that we

might make a weaver of a coast guardsman here and there."

Cooper feared it would be a somewhat difficult task to impart his skill to Nicholas, who was not over-bright in learning; but he would attempt more difficult things if they brought any chance of relief from the present unhappy state of affairs. He was as little given to despond as any man; and was more secure than many of his neighbours of being employed as long as there was occupation to be had; but it did make him tremble to look forward, when he reflected how his earnings grew less, quarter by quarter.

"Ay; that is the way," muttered Short. "You let the masters off their bargain about wages, and then you complain that your earnings are small. People's folly is a mystery to me."

"As great a mystery as the black dye,—hey, Mr. Short?" said Mrs. Cooper.

The old man smiled with an air of condescension when Mr. Culver asked, "What of the black dye?"

"Only that Mr. Rose was complaining of seldom having his goods dyed exact to pattern, sir: and the dyer made an excuse about the air;—some stuff that I forget, about the air being seldom two days alike at that time of year. As if the air had anything to do with black dye! No, no, —never tell me!"

"As great a mystery as the mishap with the steam-boat, perhaps, Mr. Short?"

" Why, ay ; there is another piece of nonsense, sir. I happened to be at hand when the little steam-boat blew up, five years ago. I saw the planks and things blown clean on shore, sir ; and they would have had me believe that it was steam that did it. ' Never tell me,' said I, ' that steam did all that.' "

" How did it happen, then, do you suppose ?"

" What is that to me ? They might blow it up with gunpowder for anything that I cared. But about the dye,—that is a different matter altogether ; and so is the affair of the wages, since our bread depends on the one and the other. And as for throwing open our trade to those French rascals, never tell me that you are not all idiots if you wish for such a thing. I have woven my last piece, sir, if you prevail to bring in a Frenchman to supplant me. Mark my words, sir, I have woven my last piece."

" I hope not, Short. I hope you will weave many another piece before you die, however we may arrange matters with the French. Mean-time, if Cooper discovers the secret of yonder pattern, as I think he will, you must find a place for your loom at the other end of the room, and be ready for your share of the work."

Short muttered that new-fangled patterns did not suit old eyes and hands like his. He must starve with the starving, since he could not take his chance with those who were fond of change. —The mention of the starving left the parties no spirits for further conversation on other subjects ; and Mr. Culver departed, while Cooper stepped

back into his loom, and the old man resumed his pipe, full of contempt for all masters that were caught by a new pattern, and of all workmen that would have anything to say to such innovations. He only wished they would come first to him with their new schemes. He should enjoy bidding them weave for themselves, if they must have new fancies.

CHAPTER III.

DUMB DUTY.

COOPER had good reason for doubting his capability of teaching Nicholas to weave, and for thinking such a task the worst consequence that could result to him from the abolition or reduction of the Coast Guard. There were, indeed, few things that Nicholas could learn to do, and it was therefore a happy circumstance for himself and his mother that his present appointment had been obtained for him. He had good eyes, and a set of strong limbs, so that he stood as fair a chance as a brighter man of seeing a boat on the waves, and of sustaining his six hours' watch to the satisfaction of his officer, in ordinary times. How he might conduct himself at any crisis,—whether he would do what he ought on seeing a suspicious vessel near the coast, or whether any human power could prevail with him to alter the periods or the mode of his watch with-

out deranging all his faculties,—was another question : but no emergency having arrived since his appointment, Nicholas was, as yet, in very good repute with everybody about him. Lieutenant Storey had never found fault with him ; and Mrs. Storey had more than once bestowed a word and a smile on him, in answer to his reverential salutation, and the open-mouthed admiration with which he was perceived to regard his officer's young bride. His mates let him alone except at those lounging times when one person did as well as another to make remarks to about the state of the weather and the water, and the prospects of the fishing below. As for the villagers, they were, from some cause or other, more civil to Nicholas than they usually were to men of his calling ; so that he determined, at least once a day, that he was a favourite of fortune, and had uncommon reason to be grateful to Providence. At least once a day ;—for so often did he usually rest his knee against a certain big stone on the beach, and look seaward through his telescope : on the first occasion of doing which, it had entered his mind that his mother admired him very much, and that everybody was very kind to him. Each time afterwards that he used the same action, he thought that everybody was very kind to him, and that his mother admired him very much ; and he grew fond of this stone, and of using his telescope in that particular place. By a sort of instinct, he rose from his knee, and shot his instrument into its case, as soon as any annoyance was suspected to be approaching ; so

that he was pretty sure of keeping his periodical mood in its primitive state.

This method of his,—of having a particular time and place fixed in which to enjoy, and another in which to endure,—was vexatious to those who delighted in teasing. The children of the village could never fix Nicholas to his stone; and when he was upon his watch he would bear anything. This being considered a settled matter, they left off attacking him at such times, leaving it to the wind and rain to overthrow his tranquillity if they could. Nicholas was not destined, however, to be always so favoured above his more irritable companions, as he found one bitter February day, when the hardships of the watch were quite enough of themselves for an ordinary stock of patience.

A dense fog hung so low that there was no use in keeping watch on the heights, and the Coast Guard were therefore stationed along the margin, in the exact position for being drenched by the spray, nipped by the wind, and stifled by the fog, as they looked with anxious gaze over the dull sea, which appeared more like a heaving expanse of oil than a congregation of waters. There was small use in peering abroad; for the mist hung like a curtain till within a furlong of the beach. As little comfort was there in looking inland. The near cliffs of Beachy Head seemed icy, and the sea-birds that dwelt there appeared to be cowering in their holes from the cold. The fishermen's huts bore the comfortless aspect that wooden houses always do when their

roofs are loaded with snow; and even the station-house, perched on the highest point of the cliffs, seemed deprived for the time of its air of cleanliness and comfort. Just at the moment when the fog fell most chilly, and the spray flew most searchingly, and the rattle of the waves on the shingle sounded most dreary, a troop of children came wandering by, some of the little ones threatening to cry with cold, but the elder ones not having had the spirit of mischief yet starved out of them. They were pupils of Mr. Pim, the village schoolmaster, and were on their way to their several homes from his well-warmed school-room. One of the troop, a brown, handsome, roguish-looking boy, ran up to Nicholas with—

“ I say, Mister, sir, what’s your name?—what’s o’clock? ”

Of course, Nicholas made no answer; and the question was put in all forms which could be expected to provoke a reply,—all to no purpose.

“ I say, master, let me hold your spy-glass while you blow upon your fingers; you can’t hold it. There! bang it goes! Lord! look, there it goes again! He can’t hold his spy-glass no more than a baby.”

The joke now was to twitch his coat-tail, or otherwise startle Nicholas, so as to cause him to drop his glass as often as his benumbed fingers raised it to the level of his eye.

“ Look, look! if his eyes be not running over every time the wind blows. Look! how he blinks away from the fog, every puff that comes! A pretty watch he makes! I say, what is that black

thing yonder, sir ? It is a boat, as sure as I am alive. You had better look sharp, sir."

" No, not that way," said another ; " more to the right, near to that cliff. No, no ; this way, to the left. Why, man, you have lost your eyes!"

The rogues were delighted to see that, though Nicholas made no reply, his head wagged from right to left, and from left to right, as they chose to turn it. When he had gazed till the fog had drawn closer round the nearer headlands, and when he wiped his eyes in the cutting wind with his coat-sleeve, till they watered faster than ever, the joke was improved upon. The children crowded together in a sheltered corner, and invited Nicholas to come too, and be comfortable, instead of standing to be buffeted like a sea-gull that knew no better. They tantalized him with accounts of what they were going to do at home, —with mention of hot broth and potatoes, of fire, of shelter, and of everything comfortable that he was not likely to have for nearly six hours to come. Nicholas was immovable ; and when they were tired of plaguing him, and ran off with expressions of insulting pity, he paced his allotted walk without any sign of anger or discontent. His first token of emotion of any kind was a vehement laugh, when he saw what next befel the little brown boy who had begun the attack on him.

The boy's companions had warned him of the uselessness of trying to provoke Nicholas, and had recommended Brady in preference,—Brady, the Irishman, who was known to find it necessary to keep the thought of punishment before

him, in order to hold his tongue when jeered by those who would take advantage of his not being able to answer. About Brady, therefore, gathered the small fry ; and they pestered him till he turned suddenly round, seized Uriah Faa, the gipsy boy, and laid him sprawling, just in advance of a ninth wave, as it was rolling on. The boy yelled, Brady resumed his walk, the other children scampered off, full of fear and wrath, and Nicholas laughed aloud.

"Really now, I call that very cruel," said a sweet voice behind him. "I would not do such a thing as that for the world ; and I should be very sorry to laugh at it. Would not you, Elizabeth ?"

"O, yes ; but what can you expect from a set of creatures like this Coast Guard, that are put here to plague the people ?" replied Elizabeth.

Overwhelmed with grief and shame stood Nicholas, tongue-tied under a charge which wounded him keenly. Elizabeth's contempt did not trouble him very much, though a stranger might have pronounced her a more particular-looking lady than her companion, from her being more gaily dressed, and carrying more grandeur in her air. His grief was that the tender-hearted, sweet-spoken little lady, who never bore ill-will to anybody, should think him cruel. It was his duty to seem to take no notice, and to go on looking out for vessels ; but Nicholas could not so play the hypocrite when Mrs. Storey was in question. An observer might have been amused

at the look of misery with which he seemed about to ask leave to go down on his knees on the wet shingle, and must have been convinced that no thought of contraband traders was in his mind as he turned to watch the ladies proceeding on their bleak way. Nicholas's only resource was to resolve to speak in defence of his comrade and himself, as soon as his watch should be ended.

In a very short time, it appeared as if the lady's words, as well as the boy's cries, had made themselves heard up the country. From one recess or another of the cliffs dropped picturesque forms, in gipsy guise, all directing their steps towards that part of the beach where Brady and Nicholas were stationed on the margin of the tide. A fisherman or two looked out lazily from the cottages ; and their more active wives drew their cloaks about them, and hastened down to see what would ensue on the ducking of a mischievous boy.

“ Goodness, Matilda ! ” cried Elizabeth, “ they are coming this way. Mercy ! they are going to speak to us. Which way shall we run ? What shall we do ? ”

And without waiting for an answer to her questions, the lady took to flight, and scuttled towards the cliff path as fast as her trembling limbs would carry her, screaming by the way, as often as any one person came nearer to her than another. Matilda, not quite foolish enough to follow at the same rate, but very much alarmed, was immediately surrounded by gipsies, vociferating in a language which she did not understand, and

pointing so angrily towards the guard, that it was plain she would be safer without their protection than with it. The state of affairs was not improved by the junction of the fishermen's wives.

"O, Mrs. Alexander," cried the lady, addressing the best known face among the latter, "what do these people want with me? What are they going to do?"

"They want you to bear witness, my lady, how the boy Uriah has been used by these cruel-hearted, thieving rogues, that don't care what mischief they do with their hands, while they have never a tongue in their heads, but creep about like spies."

"Perhaps it is very well that the tongues are all on one side," said the trembling lady; "there is no saying how quarrels might otherwise issue, Mrs. Alexander."

"Bless us! how you shake with cold, my lady! Only think what it must be to be laid flat in the water, as Uriah was by yon villain's hands. If they had been frozen off by the wrists, it would only have served him right. One would think you had been in the water too, Ma'am, by your shaking."

"I am in hot water just now," declared Matilda, half laughing. "Cannot you call off these rude people, and prevent their pressing round me? You seem to know them."

"O yes, sure, Ma'am; and you would know them too, if you had been a little longer in this place. It is only old Faa, the gipsy, and his tribe, that come here every winter. The lady

that was with you just now knows very well who they are, and where they live, for all her running away so fast."

"I wish she would come back then, for I cannot tell what in the world to say to them. Mr. Faa! Which is Mr. Faa?"

A grisly-looking old gipsy stepped forward.

"You do not suspect me of having caused your boy to be dipped, I hope?"

All bowed, and vociferated their horror at such an idea.

"Neither must you expect me to bid you duck those men. It is a very cold day; and I am so sorry to have witnessed one ducking, that I should be very unwilling to see anybody else laid under water."

This was perhaps the most foolish speech she could have made, as it put into their heads the idea of summary vengeance. She saw her mistake in the increased rage of the people, and the look of defiance that Brady put on. There was little use now in saying that there might have been fault on both sides, and that it was best to forgive and forget. There was no use in offering to tell the Lieutenant what had happened, and in answering for it that such an offence should not happen again; the people were determined to make the most of having the officer's lady on their side, and of the present opportunity of gratifying their hatred of the Coast Guard. All the ungracious acts ever committed there by a coast guard rushed into their remembrance; how one neighbour had been stopped and searched on the

beach, and the fire of another put out on the cliff, under the suspicion of its being a signal; how the boat of a third could never come home without being entered by these spies; and how, once-upon a time, a person had been shot by a choleric member of the Preventive Force. All these sins seemed likely to be now visited on the heads of Brady and Nicholas, when a mediator appeared in the shape of Pim, the schoolmaster, the most potent personage between the martello towers and Parson Darby's Hole,—a so-called cavern in the cliffs of Beachy Head.

Mr. Pim owed his influence, not to any physical force, though he was the tallest and stoutest man within five miles; nor to wealth, for he professed to have nothing but his village day-school to support his family upon; nor to any connexion with the great, for he was a bluff, homely personage, who did not want or care for anybody's favours; nor to his own superior wit, for no one was aware of his being remarkably endowed in this way. It was partly that he had given to his neighbours all the book-learning that they could boast of, and the little religion that they professed. It was yet more that he had been a long resident with his family, after having early buried his wife among them. But, above all, it was his merry heart, making itself understood by a voice mighty enough to out-bellow the waves at Beachy Head, that was the charm of Mr. Pim. He liked to be told that he should have been a preacher, with such a voice as his, and would forthwith enact the reverend gentleman for a

minute or two ; but he could never make his splendid voice bring out any thing but little jokes with small wit in them ; for the good reason that his brain would supply nothing else. Nothing more was necessary, however, to constitute him the most popular man within his sphere.

“ Hi, hi ! what is all this about ? ” was the question that came travelling through the air, as soon as his tall form became visible, approaching from the houses. “ What are you buzzing about here for, when your young one is toasting at home, as dry as the cod-sounds that hang over his head ? Toasting ! aye, at my fire. I met him dripping like a duck, and he would have slunk away ; but it was up with him this way ; ” and he seized upon a boy standing near, and threw him across his shoulder, twisting him about with one hand as if he had been a doll. “ This way I carried him home, unwilling enough, to my Rebecca. ‘ Here, Beck,’ says I, ‘ take him and toast him till I come back to give him a flogging.’ And now he is expecting me, so I must be off, as soon as you will please to give over quarrelling, and march home. Flog him ! ay, to be sure, for disturbing these men at their duty. It is a fine thing, you gipsy gentlemen, to have put your young folks under the rod ; and it would be a thousand pities not to use it. You can’t get the impish spirit out of them all in a day.”

“ But has the boy done wrong ? ” inquired Mrs. Storey. “ Even if he has, he has surely been punished enough.”

" Not while ill blood is left, my lady. I never leave off punishing my boys till they laugh with me, and it is all right again. If Mr. Faa will undertake to make his boy laugh as much as he cried half an hour ago, he is welcome to go and fetch him away. But then there must be an end of this silly business. You, sir," to Brady, " thrust your pistol into your pocket, or I will help you to chuck it deeper into the sea than you can go to fetch it."

Brady looked as angry now as the gipsies had done when they heard that Uriah was to be flogged; but neither party could long withstand Pim's authoritative style of good humour. He ended with making every body laugh, turning the attention of the guard seawards, dispersing the group of complainers in different directions, and adjourning the quarrel, if he could not dissolve it. As he attended the lady to the station-house, he explained to her the little hope there was of establishing a good understanding between the Coast Guard and the country people.

" I pity the poor fellows down below, with all my heart," said he, turning from the first point of the ascent to observe the guard, now again loitering along the margin. " Not so much for being out in the cold, though they slap themselves with their swinging arms like yon flag in a high wind. It is not for the cold I pity them, since a young lady keeps them company in it."

" I seldom stay within all day, especially when Miss Storey is with me," replied Matilda; " but I would not promise to bear this cold for six

hours ; and I do pity those poor men very much."

" So do I, madam, because they moreover meet cold looks at every turn ; which you, not being a spy, will never do."

" But these men are spies only upon those who break the laws. You do not mean that the innocent are not glad to be watched ?"

Pim looked sly while he said he knew but of one innocent in all the neighbourhood, and he happened to be among the spies, and so was very popular. Mrs. Storey would go deeper than the pun, however, and asked whether the neighbours generally had need to fear the enforcement of the law.

" I bring up all my scholars so religious, it would do your heart good to see them," replied Pim. " They know the Bible all through, and understand the whole of the Church Catechism, as you will find, if you will give us the honour of a visit some day."

" I will, to morrow, Mr. Pim."

" Suppose we say the end of the week, ma'am, when they are furbished up for the parson. You will be more sure of being pleased towards the end of the week. I make my scholars very moral."

" Then they have no reason to fear spies, I should think."

" Why, as to that, ma'am, it all depends on people's notions of what it is to be moral ; and when there is so much difference of opinion on that, it seems natural enough that each party should settle the point as seems most agreeable.

I wonder, now, what you think of the gentlefolks that come to Hastings and Brighton, and all the bathing places along this coast."

" I suppose they are much like other gentlefolks, are they not? How do their morals affect those of your scholars?"

" Why, just this way. If ladies in their walks make acquaintance with the fishermen's children, and use that as a pretence for calling on their mothers, and letting drop that they would be glad of a lot of gloves or silk hose from over beyond there, is not it natural for the cottage-girls to think the bargain a very pretty and proper one, when they see the goods brought out of the cupboard? And if gentlemen drop in here and there, as they saunter about, to taste French brandy, or pocket a few cigars, is it not likely that the lads hereabouts, who are fond of adventure at all times, will take the hint, and try their luck at sea on dark nights?"

" But are such practices common among visitors to the coast?"

" Are they not?—And those who do not care to step across a poor man's threshold themselves are ready enough to buy of such as will; of the shop-keepers at Brighton, and others that import largely. Now all this is what the law calls immoral, while the people see no reason to think so."

" And which side do you take;—you who make your scholars so moral?"

" I take neither side in my teaching, but leave the matter to be settled according as the children

have friends among the cottagers, or in the coast guard, or the law, or the custom-house. But there is one thing I do try to teach them,—not to quarrel with other people about the right and the wrong, nor to hate anybody, but let the whole thing go on quietly. God knows, it is hard work enough; but I do try. It is hard work; for they hate each of those watchers as if he had cloven feet and a long tail."

" How do you set about making the guard beloved?"

" Nay, nay, that is too much to try. And it is doubly difficult to me from my having a son in the custom-house; which exposes me to be called partial; but I always say, ' Hate them in your hearts as much as you will; but you owe it to your king and country not to show it. Be as civil to the king's servants as you would to his majesty himself.' "

" I am afraid you do not always succeed; I should as soon think of telling a man that he need not mind having a fever; but he must take particular care that his hands be not hot."

" Where we cannot do every thing, ma'am, we must do what we can. How should I prevent the guard being unpopular, when they act as spies every hour of the day and night? And would you have me declare them always in the right when it is their very business to prevent people getting the goods that they want and will have? As long as people will drink brandy, and smoke tobacco, and wear silks and laces, I see no use in preaching to them to buy dear when

they can buy cheap. All I pretend to is to make as little harm come of it as possible ; to persuade the people to sell their spirits instead of drinking them, and avoid brawls with the enemy they must submit to have set over them."

"With my husband and his men," said Mrs. Storey, smiling at the idea of her husband's being any man's enemy. The notion was almost as absurd (in a different way) in relation to him as to Nicholas.

"You see, ma'am, it is not only that this Coast Guard is a terrible spoil-sport ; it is a very expensive thing. When the people pay their taxes, and when they look at the nearest Custom-house,—aye, every time a Preventive officer has a new coat, they remember that they pay for keeping spies over themselves. This is provoking, you will allow ; and many's the time they throw it in my teeth,—I having a son in the Custom-house, as I said."

"Why do you not tell them that, if there were no duties, they would lose their trade at the same time that they got rid of their enemies ? Do not they see that fishermen would no longer be employed in fetching silks and spirits, if there were no laws to hinder merchants from doing it as cheaply ? I should like to see how your neighbours would look if every custom-house was pulled down throughout the country, and every man in the Preventive Service sent about other business."

"Why, then, I suppose, fishermen would be simply fishermen, and my son must come and

help me to keep school,—if any school remained for me to keep.”

“ How would such an arrangement interfere with your school ?”

Mr. Pim mysteriously gave the lady to understand that fishermen cannot commonly afford schooling for their children, unless they have some resource beyond their boats and nets. Nobody knew how much of the money circulating in this neighbourhood came through the breach of the laws which some of it was employed to maintain. He went on,—

“ It would be some comfort that there would be fewer taxes for us to pay ; and if government kept up reasonable duties (which would be but fair) the burden would fall lightly upon all. Government would not be cheated ; we should not be insulted with useless taxes and with spies, and—”

“ And some of you would have your pockets lightened of much ill-gotten money, and your hearts of much hatred that it is shocking to think of,” replied the lady.

“ Moreover, we should see less of the gipsies,” observed Mr. Pim. “ Whether this would be a good or an evil, is a point that some of us might differ upon ; but it is certain that they would not settle in bleak places like this in winter, if there were not something likely to happen in the long nights to repay them for the bitterness of the short days. They would not like our bare sandy levels and our cold caverns better than a snug London alley, —if there were not good things

to be had here that do not fall in their way there."

" You would lose a scholar or two if the gipsies kept away. I cannot think how you persuaded such people to send their children to school."

Pim laughed heartily, but gave no explanation. As they drew near the turf-fence of the station-house, he stopped to contemplate the place, and observed that it was a neat, tight little dwelling, and pleasanter, he should think, for a lady to live in than the martello towers farther on. There was something dreary-looking in those towers, as if they must be cold in winter and hot in summer, perched upon the bare sands, and made up of thick walls with few windows. Whereas, the white station-house seemed just the place which might suitably have plants trained against it now that a lady's fine taste reigned within (supposing the wind would let them grow); and as for its winter evening comforts,—when he saw gleams from the window piercing the darkness, like a lesser beacon, he could only be sorry for the Lieutenant that it was ever necessary to leave such a fire-side as there must be within, to go out amidst scenes where—where—

" Where he is much less welcome," replied Matilda, smiling. " I dare say your people,—fishermen, gipsies, schoolmasters, and all,—would strongly recommend my husband staying where he is comfortable, let what will be doing on the beach."

" And I am sure you should, my lady, as a good wife. If you knew——"

" Do not tell me," replied Matilda, hastily. " I will hear of those things from nobody but my husband himself."

While Mr. Pim was inwardly saying that the lady would scarcely hear from the Lieutenant the worst that could be told, Miss Storey came running to the gate, full of wonder whether all was safe, and what the gipsies had done to Matilda, and how her sister-in-law had prospered since she herself had so valiantly left her side. Matilda did not trouble herself to reply with more civility than Elizabeth deserved; but bestowed all the overplus on the schoolmaster, whom she invited in to enjoy the comforts of shelter and fire.

Mr. Pim could not stay to do more than compliment the lady on her endurance of the sharp cold of the sea-shore. He concluded she would scarcely pass her doors again till milder weather should come.

" O yes, I shall," replied Matilda. " Be the weather what it may, I shall come and visit your daughter, and see how you make your scholars moral, gipsies and all."

The gipsies were the most moral people in the world, to judge by the punctuality and liberality of their payments, Mr. Pim declared; and when the imp was whipped out of them, they made very good scholars. With this explanation, and something between a bow and a nod, the rosy schoolmaster took his leave, and, with his hands behind him, and beginning to whistle before the ladies had turned their backs, shuffled briskly down the slope to the sea-shore.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AFTERNOON TRIP.

MATILDA could not imagine why Elizabeth had not gone home, instead of waiting all this time at the station-house. It must be past Mrs. Storey's dinner hour, and there seemed some reason to fear that Elizabeth meant to stay for the rest of the day. If she did, however, she must invite herself, Matilda resolved; for it was far from being her own inclination to have any guest on this particular occasion;—the day of her husband's return after an absence of half a week,—the terrible first absence after a marriage of six weeks. They had met only for one hour in the forenoon; dinner-time would soon bring him home, and it would be too provoking to have a third person to intrude, especially if that third person were Elizabeth, of whom the Lieutenant was more fond than his wife could at all account for. Elizabeth might see, if she chose, that she was unwelcome; for Matilda had no intention of concealing the fact. She neither sat down, nor asked Elizabeth to do so; but, throwing off her bonnet, and stirring the fire, employed herself next in rectifying the time-piece by her own watch.

" My dear," Elizabeth began, strenuously warming herself.

" I wish she would not call me 'my dear,'" thought Matilda; " it is so old maidish." But

Matilda might have known that a wife of twenty is very naturally called 'my dear' by a sister-in-law of thirty-five.

"My dear," resumed Elizabeth, "you talked of going to see Mr. Pim's school. We may as well go together. Fix your time."

Matilda could not fix any time at present. Her husband had been absent, and her engagements must depend on his for some days to come.

"Very well. I know he is always out between ten and one o'clock; and that will be your time. I shall expect you some morning soon, between ten and twelve, as the school breaks up at noon. It lies straight past our door; but if you wish me to call you, I can easily come up."

"O, by no means, thank you. But we shall meet before the end of the week, and can fix all about it. Mr. Pim wishes us not to go till the end of the week, when the children will have their catechism at their tongues' ends."

"As to meeting, I do not know," replied Elizabeth. "I am going to be very busy for some days. And indeed it is time I was at home now; for I promised my mother to cut out a cap for her before dark." And Elizabeth extended her hand to take her muff.

"Indeed!" cried Matilda, briskly. "Let me walk part of the way home with you. And you must allow me to help you with your work. You know I have nothing to do, and——"

"So it seems, indeed," replied Elizabeth; looking round with a supercilious smile, upon the bare work-table, the perfectly-arranged book shelves, and the closed piano, which collectively

presented a picture of a most bride-like lack of occupation.

"If you are inclined to send up your mother's handkerchiefs," said Matilda, coldly, "it will give me great pleasure to make them."

"Not for the world," Elizabeth declared. So fond as her brother was of Matilda's music, and so much as they were to read together, Matilda could have no time for anybody's affairs but her own ;—a decision which Matilda submitted to in silence. Elizabeth proceeded to deliver a dozen messages from her mother to the young house-keeper, about the butcher, and the milkman, and their own, dear, favourite fisherman, who supplied them so much better than the one Matilda patronized. She must positively begin to buy her fish of him directly, though they would not for the world interfere with her little domestic plans ; but she might not know that George liked above all things—

Matilda sprang to the window, seeing something through the gathering dusk like the skirt of a coat. It was only the sentinel, however, and she drew back disappointed, and applied herself to examine whether her hyacinths were duly supplied with water.

"Just one thing more," Elizabeth said. "You will excuse my mother observing (but indeed we could not help it) the plaiting of George's shirts. It is impossible you should know all his ways yet, —indeed how should you?—so, I will just mention that he has been used—"

"How very dark it is growing!" observed Matilda, once more peering out into the dusk.

"O no, it is not so bad out of doors," she added, when she had thrown up the sash. "It is impossible to tell what the weather is like, the windows being double, and such a state as they are always in with the damp from the sea. I wish, with all your management, Elizabeth, you would teach one how to keep one's windows clear and bright by the sea-side. It spoils half the pleasure of working or reading in this window-seat. In the summer time, however, when one can sit with the window open, it will be delightful. But it really is getting dark."

"I am going," said Elizabeth, quietly. "You shall have your husband all to yourself to-day, my dear. By the way, do you mean to tell him of that little affair down below this morning?"

"Do I mean to tell him?" cried Matilda, astonished. "To be sure. I tell him everything."

"O, very well. I would only just give a hint that that plan may not always be prudent, my dear: that is all. You are in a very responsible situation, you should remember; such ticklish terms as your husband and his men are on with the people about you. A little indiscretion on your part,—perfectly natural at your age,—may bring on bloodshed, you are aware. Do you know, my dear, I would not be in your place for the world."

"Would not you?" replied Matilda, with astonishing tranquillity.

"Why, only think of the incident of this day. How do we know what may arise out of it, if you repeat it to George? He must take notice of it, when otherwise it might pass over."

"Without his hearing how you shrieked and ran away," thought Matilda; and she was strongly tempted to say it, but refrained: and when Elizabeth at length found that she really must be going if she meant to be at home before dark, the sisters by marriage parted on friendly terms.

The Lieutenant looked somewhat graver than usual when he came in to dinner, and little disposed to talk while a third person was present. Moreover, he had the air of listening in the intervals between the clattering of plates and knives, and the creaking of the servant's shoes. Before drawing to the fire, when the door was at length closed behind table-cloth and cheese, he went to the window to look out,—the dull window which allowed little to be seen through its salted panes. He was about to repair to an upper window, but Matilda wrapped her head in a shawl, and threw up the sash.

"You would have me believe," she said, in answer to her husband's fears, "that I am not fit to live in this place: but I scorn both wind and fog. If you should wish to set a watch in Parson Darby's hole, I believe I should serve your purpose as well as any body;—as long, I mean, as no fighting was required."

"Let us see what you will make of it to-night, without going to Parson Darby's hole. If your eyes and ears are better than mine, I may be glad of them presently."

"What am I to look and listen for? This booming sea is enough to prevent our hearing

anything else, unless it be two of your gruff men talking close by the window. What else do you expect me to hear?"

" Possibly a whistle, which may be heard among all conceivable combinations of hoarse sounds."

" But your own men whistle."

" Not to-night. They have orders to the contrary."

" Mr. Pim whistles perpetually, when he is not mimicking a whining, whipped scholar, or waiting the explosion of some practical joke. What is to be done with poor Mr. Pim, if he is caught in the fact?"

" He will take care to be caught in no fact that will do him any harm. Only tell me if you hear a whistle; that is all. And point out any signal you may see;—but, I dare say, you do not know how to look for one."

" I wish you would take me out, and teach me."

" What, now? This bitter evening? My love, you could scarcely keep your footing in this wind. And it is so dark——"

" So much the better for a first lesson. If you are really going yourself, do take me with you."

In two minutes Matilda was ready, laughing at the appearance she made with her head swathed in a shawl, and the rest of her person in a cloak, to save the annoyance which her usual out-of-doors dress would have been in a high wind. Clinging to her husband, making many a false

step, and invariably laughing as she recovered her footing, she gained the ridge of the cliff, and stood amidst all the sublimity of a gusty night on the wild sea-shore. The blast took away her breath, as fast as she gained it, and her husband's voice was almost lost in the roar and dash from beneath, while the lightest of her shriller tones made itself heard through the commotion.

"Now show me how to look for a signal," she said. "They do not surely light fires on the headlands?"

"If they wished it, they must ask leave of the wind," replied her husband, "as well as of us; and they know they will have no leave of the one or the other, to-night. No: they make their fires in the clefts and caverns, and——"

"I see one! I see one!" cried Matilda, eagerly pointing to a gleam which came and went, like a bright speck on the horizon.

"That, my love!" cried her husband, laughing. "They must be bold smugglers who would run in to such a light as that. That is the light on Belltoot, made to look distant by the fog. You should turn eastwards; and seek rather for indications of a light, than for the light itself. If you see a dull red streak, or the least glimmer upon the passing fog, show it me. It will tell that there is a fire in a chalk pit or a cavern."

After looking for some time in vain, Matilda inquired whether there was reason to suppose that the smugglers were particularly busy this night. Not knowing who might be near in the darkness, her husband pressed her arm in token

that questions of this nature would be better answered at home.

They walked on till they fell in with one of the sentinels, who was of opinion that nothing out of the common way would be done to-night, as the storm was rising to such a height as would make it too hazardous for even the most daring smugglers to run in at Birling Gap, or at any other place on the neighbouring coast.

" You hear, Matilda," said the Lieutenant. " Now, have you seen all that you wish to see ?"

" By no means," she replied, laughing : " but it does not seem likely that we should gain anything by staying ; so you had better go down and finish your wine, and we can come again to-morrow night."

The sudden calm and quiet of the little parlour made the Lieutenant rub his hands under the sense of comfort, while Matilda put back her lank hair from over her eyes, and prepared to tell the story of the morning. The Lieutenant had however already heard it. Matilda was glad of this, and went on to ask if any harm could possibly arise from telling her husband every thing that happened to her, and all that she observed. No harm in the world, but possibly a great deal of good. It might put her on her guard against doing and saying things which were perfectly innocent and amiable in themselves, but which might be imprudent under certain circumstances ; —such as showing herself indignant on seeing a gipsy boy ducked, when the neighbours were already quite angry enough on his account. The

Lieutenant loved to see her ardour in such causes ; but he was sorry to say it did not consist with the prudence necessary to be observed by any one connected with him, in his present office. This was enough to make Matilda vituperate the office, till she remembered that by its means her husband was detained by her side, instead of being dispatched to the other end of the world. It required this and many other comforting considerations to reconcile the Lieutenant himself to this service, uncongenial as it was to the spirit of an active and enterprising officer, who had no particular pleasure in playing the spy on a grand scale, and who found it galling to a kindly temper to live among a host of enemies. He had hesitated long about accepting the appointment, entertaining, in addition to his disinclination, a fear that it would be an effectual bar to further promotion. If it had not been that his mother and sister depended mainly on him for support, and that, having waited till forty, he wished to marry, he would hardly have bartered the hope of professional eminence for pecuniary advantage ; but, circumstanced as he was, he thought it right to accept an appointment which allowed him to enjoy the fruits of former service while gaining more by present duty. Though satisfied that he had done right, and fully sensible of the blessing of having a home always about him, he had no objection to hear the Preventive Service found fault with in a quiet way by his own fireside, and foreign service exalted at its expense.

“ What could put it into your head, Matilda,

that harm could come of your telling me every thing? The prudence I speak of relates to your reserve with our neighbours, not with me. What could have put such an idea into your head?"

"Elizabeth thought that I had better not tell you every thing. But if I really have a difficult part to act, I shall be miserable without your help. I never could act for myself in my life."

"Never?" asked her husband, with a smile. "I think you can boast of one act of remarkable decision, my love."

"Half the merit, at least, was yours," replied Matilda, laughing. "And as for guiding myself without you, it is out of the question. So I must tell you all that happens, and you must teach me how to behave to our neighbours."

Her husband paused for a moment to reflect what a pity it was that, when Matilda's natural behaviour was all that was charming, she should be put under restraint by the position she filled. It was a hard task to have to teach her to suspect her neighbours, and to frame her conduct by her suspicions.

"You have no reason for trying to manage me by reserves," said he. "Elizabeth has, no doubt, her own little mysteries."

Matilda looked up surprised. She had never before heard the Lieutenant speak of his sister but with fondness and confidence.

"I mean no reproach," he continued. "Elizabeth is a good creature, and the best of sisters to me. I only mean that she has her womanish

tastes, which, like other women, she must gratify ; and she knows it is the properst and kindest thing to let me know nothing of her confidential visits to the fishermen's wives. I cannot prevent her doing what every body else does ; and it is better that I should not be obliged to take any notice."

" What do you mean ?" cried Matilda. " Is it possible that Elizabeth has anything to do with smugglers ? that——"

" Ah, now you have started upon a new scent, my dear ; and let us see what you can make of it before you get home again.—Now you are fancying Elizabeth out at sea at night in the lugger we are looking for, or helping to land the goods ; and the first day that passes without your seeing her, you will fancy she has taken a trip to Guernsey. Do not you begin to see how a thousand little mysterious circumstances are now explained ? Cannot you account for——"

Matilda held up her hand as petitioning to be heard, while her fond husband delighted himself with her signs of impatience under his raillery.—She protested that she knew perfectly well what his charge against Elizabeth amounted to ; that she contrived to buy articles of dress better and cheaper by the seaside than these could be procured in shops. She only wished to say, that she desired to acquit Elizabeth as far as her testimony would go. She had no reason to suppose, from anything that she had seen, that Elizabeth was given to such practices.

"It may be some time before she takes you into her confidence in these matters, my dear. Meantime, do not let us talk of 'charge' and 'acquittal,' as if Elizabeth had committed a crime. If I thought so, I would not have credited the fact on any testimony whatever."

"How then can you be what you are?" exclaimed Matilda. "If you think smuggling is no crime, why do you engage to spend your days in suspicion, and your nights in watching, and even to spill human blood, if necessary, to prevent contraband trading?"

"My office springs out of a set of arbitrary regulations which may possibly be necessary to the general good of society. At any rate, they subsist, and they must be maintained as long as the nation does not decide that they shall be abolished. This is all we Preventive officers have any concern with. It does not follow that we must condemn a lady for preferring one sort of lace or silk stockings to another, or for trying to get them, when she knows government has failed in the attempt to keep them out of the country."

"You say this just because Elizabeth is in question," replied Matilda. "Suppose I were to report it to the Admiralty, or the Board of Trade—how would it look upon paper?"

"I dare say you would not find a man at the Admiralty, or any where else,—a sensible man,—who would declare a taste for foreign commodities,—for as large a variety of commodities as possible, of the best kinds, to be anything but

a good. No man of sense wishes the society in which he lives to be in that state of apathy which does not desire what is best, but only to be saved trouble. Neither does he recommend that the desire of that which is best should be gratified at the greatest possible expense and trouble."

" Certainly, one would rather see one's neighbours wishing for French silks, than being content with skins of beasts ; and, if they must have silks, one would rather get the material from Italy and India than have establishments for silkworms at home at a vast expense."

" To be sure. And we might as well at once wish for English beet-root sugar, or for claret made from hot-house grapes, as condemn Elizabeth for desiring to have foreign lace. As for our countrymen liking to have tobacco duty-free, when the duty amounts to a thousand per cent. on the prime cost,—there is nothing to be wondered at in that. Moreover, the desire of foreign commodities is the cause of a great saving. These goods are not permanently desired because they are foreign. Their having acquired a reputation as foreign must arise from their being better or cheaper than our own. Our own productions of the same kind are either improved through the competition thus caused, or they give way in favour of other productions which we can in turn offer to foreigners better and cheaper than their own. If nobody cared for claret and tobacco, thousands of our people, who are busy in preparing that which is given in exchange for

these articles, would be idle ; and if we were bent upon growing our own tobacco, and forcing vines instead of buying of our neighbours, the expense would be tremendous, and would answer no good purpose on earth that I can see. So Elizabeth is as much at liberty to wish for Brussels lace, if she prefers it to Honiton, as I feel myself to fill my glass with this good Port in preference to my mother's gooseberry."

" I should think nobody doubts all this about wine, and sugar, and tobacco," said Matilda. " But when it comes to the question of manufactures that really can maintain a rivalry,—then is the time, I suppose, when it is said to be wrong to wish for foreign goods. As long as really good silks, and really beautiful laces are made in England, at a moderate price, is there any occasion to buy of foreigners ?"

" Whether there is occasion, is soon proved by the fact of our looking or not looking abroad. As I said before, if these articles are to be had as good at home, we shall not look abroad ; if not, it is a waste of money and trouble to be making them, when we might be making something which foreigners would be glad to take in exchange for their laces and silks. If the rival manufactures are a match for each other, let them fight it out, and the nations will be sure not to be charged more than is necessary for their purchases. If they are not a match for each other, it is sheer waste to uphold the weakest ; and the taste for foreign goods is of use as it points out infallibly when the weakness lies at home."

" I have heard all this allowed as to necessary articles ; such as brandy and sugar, which are never made in England. But I have had many a lecture against buying luxuries anywhere but at home ; and really it seems a very small sacrifice to be content with home-made luxuries instead of foreign."

" Those who so lectured you, love, were more intent upon fitting you to be the wife of a Preventive officer, than upon teaching you plain sense. They did not tell you that this is a sort of sacrifice which (like many other arbitrary sacrifices) hurts all parties. They did not point out to you that every purchase of a foreign luxury presupposes something made at home with which the purchase is effected. The French fan you played with so prettily the first time——"

" O, do you remember that fan ? that evening ?"

" Remember the first ball at which I danced with you, love ! It would be strange if I forgot it."

And the Lieutenant lost the thread of his argument for a while.

" Well ! " said Matilda, at length ; " what clumsy, home-made thing do you think I gave for that fan ?"

" You probably gave nothing more clumsy than a bright golden guinea, or a flimsy bank-note : but, having got to the bottom of the money exchanges, we should find that some yards of cotton, or a few pairs of scissors had been exchanged for that fan, with a profit to the manu-

facturer of either article that it might happen to be. Thus, every purchase of a foreign article, be it a necessary or a luxury, presupposes some domestic production for which we thereby obtain a sale."

" And the same must be the case with the French fan-makers. They, or their neighbours, procure cotton gowns or scissors for their wives which they must have paid more for at home. So there is an advantage to each, unless my fan could have been as well made in England."

" In which case, there would have been a fan made instead of so many pairs of scissors; that is all; and you would have been just as well pleased with an English fan."

" Would you?" inquired Matilda, smiling.

" I never saw a fan I liked so well," replied the Lieutenant: " but there is no saying what I might have thought of any other fan under the same circumstances."

" Well, I shall tell Elizabeth, if she lets me into her confidence, that she may come here dressed in French fabrics, without any fear of displeasing you?"

" I shall not take upon myself to be displeased about the matter, while those who have more concern in it than I are not strict. If French silks rustle in the royal presence, and bandanas are flourished by law-makers in full assembly, I do not see why the officers of government should embarrass themselves with scruples. My business is to prevent contraband goods from being landed hereabouts, and not to

find out who has the benefit of them when they are once on shore."

This reminded the Lieutenant to look out again, and Matilda remained musing at the fire for a few moments. It seemed to her that our native manufacturers were very ill-used, being deprived of the stimulus to improvement which is caused by free and fair competition, while they were undersold in their own market, with the connivance of those who mocked them with the semblance of protection. She thought the dwellers on the coast ill-used; their duty to the government being placed, by arbitrary means, in direct opposition to their interests, and their punishment being severe and, from its nature, capricious, in proportion as temptation was made too strong for them. Her husband's shout of "Holloa, there!" to some person without brought her to the window, where she saw against the dim sky the outline of one who appeared motionless and dumb.

It was not for a considerable time that any explanation could be elicited. At last a melancholy, gruff voice said,

"I thought I might chance to see my lady. I was only looking about for my lady."

"And where did you expect to find me, Nicholas?" asked Matilda, looking out over her husband's shoulder. "You may have seen me sit on yonder gun, or lean over the fence sometimes; but I do not choose such an hour or such weather as this."

Nicholas only knew that he could have no rest

till he had apologized for not having answered when he was spoken to in the morning. He wished to say that he must not speak while on watch ; but, as to being disrespectful to the lady——”

The lady acquitted him of any such enormity, and would have sent him away happy with the assurance that she did not now conclude him stony-hearted for laughing when Uriah Faa was ducked. The Lieutenant had, however, a word to say to him about the state of things on the beach. No alarm had been given, Nicholas reported, though he would not, for his part, swear that the expected vessel might not be near. He had not seen that vessel, nor any other ; for, as the Lieutenant might have observed, it was too dark to see anything : but he would not swear that it might not be to be seen, if it was now daylight. This being all that could be got out of him, Nicholas was permitted to depart to his rest ; rest which he wanted not a little, for he had lingered about for more than an hour at the close of his watch, in the vague hope of seeing Matilda, without taking any measures to do so. He stretched his tired limbs before the fire, thinking (though he was nearly a quarter of a mile from the big stone on the beach) that he was a happy man, as everybody was very kind to him.

CHAPTER V.

MORNING WALKS.

THE next dawn broke bright and clear, to the surprise of every body who was learned in the weather, and greatly to the disappointment of certain parties who had an interest in the continuance of the fog.

On a steep slope among the cliffs of Beachy Head, at the foot of a lofty wall of chalk, and sheltered by it, was collected a party of men, women, and children, who had little appearance of having just risen from their beds. The men, for the most part, were stretched at length, drinking, or looking out languidly to sea. The two women, one young, the other middle aged, and brown, weather-worn, and in sordid apparel, with lank hair hanging about her ears, were smoking, and busying themselves in the feminine employment of making a clearance. That is, they were stowing certain packages in the bottom of huge panniers, destined for the backs of three asses, which were looking up from the beach in vain longing for the inaccessible, scanty herbage of the slope. Two girls, as brown as the elder woman, were amusing themselves with picking up the balls of foam which had been thrown in by the fierce tide, and sending them trembling down the wind. Uriah Faa, in apparent forgetfulness of the disgraces of the

preceding day, sat dangling his heels from a projecting piece of the cliff, aiming fragments of chalk at the auks and wills which flapped past him, or swept out to sea in long lines below. One man was seen apart from the group, who did not appear to belong to the place, the persons, or the hour. He stood leaning at the mouth of a cleft in the chalk precipice, sometimes yawning, sometimes buttoning his great coat closer, as the morning breeze passed him, and then glancing up apprehensively at one point after another of the cliffs overhead, as if he expected to see there the peeping face of a spy. Next, he looked at his watch, and seemed growing so restless and uncomfortable, that the younger of the women took upon herself to comfort him by giving notice that the sloop was expected every moment to arrive for its cargo of chalk, and that all would be safe before the spies could see so far off as a furlong.

“ But the division is not made yet,” objected the agent. “ My bandanas are stowed away with some of Solomon’s packages ; and you know Alexander makes over to me his venture of ribbons and lace, this time.”

“ What put that into your head ?” growled Alexander, half raising himself, and looking surlily at the agent. “ Do you think I have risked running in in a fog, and wrought since midnight, to give over my share to anybody ? You may take your chance next time. You’ll find the matter well worth staying for.”

“ But, you know, Alexander, we settled that

I was to have the first batch that was landed ;— for a consideration, you remember—for a fair consideration. One night suits you as well as another, living on the spot."

" By no means ; when one batch is safe ashore, and the other still at sea."

" But, consider, I cannot spare two days. They want me at Brighton every hour, and I promised Breme that he should have the goods —"

Alexander seemed to think that all this was nothing to him, while he had his package safe under his elbow. He applied himself to a fresh dram of Hollands, and appeared to have done listening.

" Try Solomon," advised Mrs. Draper. " He is liberal, and likes to accommodate. He will take the chance of another night, if you make it worth his while."

" Here comes Solomon himself," cried several voices, as a well-known whistle announced the approach of some one ; and Mr. Pim appeared from a side path, (if path it might be called,) his hands crossed behind him, and his merry face shining through the dusk.

" I thought you would take your morning's walk this way," observed Mrs. Draper, as she handed him a mug, and pointed to the right keg.

" It is time we were parting instead of meeting," said Pim. " We shall have a bright morning upon us full soon enough."

" Father," shouted Uriah, " the fog is drawing off, and here is the sloop coming in below."

"Trinity, bring the ass to yon point," cried Mrs. Draper to her little daughter, who was scrambling on all fours up the steepest part of the slope.

"Here, Lussha, my beauty," said old Faa to his grandchild, "help me to fill up the panniers, my bird."

Uriah came to help, and a respectable load of chalk was presently heaped upon the packages in the panniers, which were forthwith carried down, and hung upon the shaggy asses. Old Faa then helped to set each bare-legged child astride on the beasts, and commended them to each other's care. Slowly and surely the animals took their way along the ribbed chalk which here constituted the beach, while the children looked back to hear what Pim was saying to them.

"Trinity Draper, I hope you don't forget your catechism, my child. There is a lady coming to the school in a day or two, and it will be the worse for you if you cannot say your Catechism. Uriah and Lussha, you hear what I say. Remember your catechism."

Their Saturday's train of associations being awakened by this warning, the children began involuntarily to gabble altogether, and their confusion of tongues made itself heard as they wound out of sight, till a stumble of Trinity's steed caused Uriah's gallantry to prevail over his scholarship, and occupied him in belabouring her ass with true gipsy grace and strength.

A pale yellow ray shot up from the horizon full into the cleft, beside which the unshaven and

weary agent stood, making his bargain with Pim. This first break of sunshine was a signal not to be neglected. The laziest of the party sprang to their feet, and hastened to deposit their kegs and bales under the chalk which formed the apparent cargo of the sloop that pitched below in the light grey waters. As the fog disclosed more and more of the expanse, two or three of the men fixed their glasses from behind different projections, anxious to be assured that the lugger, which had approached under cover of the darkness, was scudding away before the light. She was just visible when the whole horizon became clear, making all speed towards her native coast. Though there was reason to hope that all was safe, as far as she was concerned, there was danger that the smuggling party might be surprised by the apparition of the revenue cutter from the east or the west, before all needful precautions were taken; and there was a prodigious stir among the more active and the more timid of the party. Within half an hour the fire was put out, and the embers scattered to the winds; the men wandered off in different directions, and nobody remained amidst the wild scene but Mr. Pim, who looked about him and whistled to the sea-birds, and Mrs. Draper, who lingered behind the rest of the gipsy party, to seek satisfaction to her maternal and friendly solicitudes about the progress of her child and the Faas at the school.

By dint of many questions, she learned that the young people were likely to be excellent Christians, as they were very ready at the Bible;

highly moral, as they were always whipped when they did wrong ; as patriotic as if they had not belonged to a foreign tribe, since they lost no opportunity of insulting the Preventive men ; and finally, very scholastic, as they had learned to sit still by the half hour together, which had at first appeared a point impossible of achievement. The mother's heart was so elated with this report, and Pim found it so much pleasanter to walk and whistle in the wintry sunshine than to play the pedagogue, that the discourse was prolonged far beyond the hour when his duties ought to begin ; he comforting himself with the assurance that Rebecca would take care that the little things had something to do.

In the midst of his holiday mood, he was disturbed by a voice calling him from overhead, and, looking up, he perceived Rebecca herself, earnestly gesticulating at the summit of the cliff. She shouted, she beckoned, incessantly, and seemed in such a fever of impatience that her father concluded that some disaster must have happened.

“ Hi, hi, Beck !” resounded his mighty voice, in answer, from the face of the cliff, as he began to scramble up the track by which he had descended. “ What, is the house on fire, girl, or do the spies want to get hold of me ?” he asked, with prodigious tranquillity ; “ or,” and at the thought he quickened his scramble into a kind of kangaroo leap, “ or has any harm come to some of the brats ?”

“ The ladies are come ! the ladies ! and no-

body at home but I and the dame," cried Rebecca; and her news seemed to be received with nearly as much vexation by her father as it was related with agony by herself.

"They will dodge the brats, and put them out," he growled in his deepest tone: "after all the pains I meant to take to-day, the little things will be out in their Bibles, though they can say it all with me. The Faas and Draper will not be there, however; only the soberer sort of children."

He was mistaken. The gipsy pupils were present with the rest, and formed a part of the class which Matilda had collected around her, and whom she was now engaged in examining.

"Think of your running away yourself!" muttered Pim to his daughter. "Why could not you have sent the dame? There would have been no harm in her knowing where I was."

"She would hardly have hobbled there and back before dinner," replied Rebecca. "We have been very quick, and the ladies can't have got far."

They had got far enough to see that though the children had (in their own phrase) "got into the Bible," they had not (to use their master's) "got through it" with the understanding, whether or not they had with the tongue. The children Matilda was conversing with were all between ten and fifteen years of age, and therefore capable of giving intelligent answers about the patriarchal tale they had been reading, if about any part of the Bible whatever.

"What did they do next," she asked, "after determining where they should settle?"

"They pitched their tents before it grew dark."

"Do you know how a tent is pitched?"

"Yes, my lady; it is daubed all over with tar."

Uriah Faa, well-informed on this matter, set the mistake right.

"When they saluted each other, what did they do? What is it to salute?"

"They scolded each other right well."

"If they had wished to scold one another, there would hardly have been such handsome presents given;—so many sheep and oxen, and asses and camels. What is a camel?"

"A sow."

"But they *had* been angry with one another," observed a child.

"Yes; but they were now going to be friends, though they thought each other in fault. Should we be sorry or angry when others are in fault?"

"Angry."

"Why?"

"Because they have no business to do wrong."

"And if others are angry with us, what should we do?"

"Give them as good as they bring."

Matilda began now to despair of the much-vaunted morals of Mr. Pim's pupils; but, to give them a fair trial, she turned to the New Testament, and questioned them about a story that their master allowed they knew perfectly well.

"When the Apostle had neither silver nor gold, what did he give to the lame man?"

“ Halfpence.”

The explanation on the subject of halfpence led to a commentary on the story of the poor widow, and her gift to the treasury.

“ Now, little boy,” said Matilda to one of the youngest, who had been playing stealthily with the end of her fur tippet, “ what was the widow’s mite? What is a mite? ”

“ A flea.”

“ He knows most about the Old Testament,” observed his master, anxious to shift his ground again.

“ Yes,” replied Matilda, “ he told me about Esau and Jacob, and the mess of pottage. What is a mess, children? ”

“ Ashes,”—“ Dirt,”—“ Rubbish,”—cried they.

“ And what is pottage? ”

“ Sheep’s head and taters.”

Matilda thought she would try them with the Commandments. “ Is it right to covet? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Why so? ”

“ Because it makes us comfortable to have things.”

As a last experiment, she turned back to the first page of the Bible, and found they could tell that the world was made in six days; upon hearing which Mr. Pim began to rally his spirits.

“ What were the two great lights which were made to rule the day and the night? ”

“ Dungeness and the North Foreland.”

Matilda rose, and the schoolmaster put the class to flight in a trice, with a box on the ear to

one, a shake to a second, and a kick to a third. Matilda's remonstrances were lost amidst the tumult of shrieks and yells which now arose. At the first moment that Pim could spare from correcting his pupils, he informed the lady that they had got on badly lately from the impossibility of getting the parents to send them regularly. When there was any work in hand, someway up the beach—

“ Towards Birling Gap,” suggested Matilda. “ But that sort of work is done in the night, is it not?”

“ Yes; but the little things have enough to do the next day in making a clearance; and, at such times, up they start, and away, the first minute I turn my back.”

“ You turn your back to go after the same business, I am afraid, Mr. Pim. If you like whistling among the cliffs, and driving bargains in the clefts better than keeping to your desk, how can you expect the children not to take the liberty of indulging the same taste when you give them opportunity?”

Mr. Pim looked about him to ascertain what o'clock it was, and would fain have made out that it was time for the children to go home; but Mrs. Storey would not let him off so easily. She convinced him that it was not yet eleven, and declared that she wished far more to see how matters ordinarily went on than to usurp the office of interrogator. When the children had recovered their spirits, and their master his composure, business was resumed; and Matilda was

as much surprised at the cleverness with which some things were taught as she had been shocked at the deficiencies of the kind of learning in which Mr. Pim was the least versed. She now envied him his power over the children's minds, and the effect which he knew how to produce by a timely joke, or a familiar illustration, or an appeal to facts with which his pupils were already familiar. She only wished that he would pique himself rather less upon his morals while making the very most of the opposition of interests in the society about him. He could not speak of any virtue without pointing out that his friends had it, and the Preventive men not; and, even in the presence of the Lieutenant's wife, it seemed difficult to restrain the expressions of hatred which were on the lips of him who taught and of those who answered.

The ladies did not leave the school till it was emptied of the children, whom they followed, to see how some dropped into their several homes, and whither others betook themselves. The last who was left to trip along by herself was Trinity Draper, who cast a glance behind her at almost every step, as if not liking to have her return accompanied by strangers. They had no intention, however, of losing sight of her, as they were disposed for a walk, and found their curiosity excited by the mingled barbarism and civilization in the air of the children of this wandering tribe.

They began, after a time, to suspect that the little girl did not mean to let them see her place of abode, so manifold were her turns and wind-

ings from the beach to the fields, and then upon the downs, and again to the beach. When she had led them through a long circuit, she finally struck up the country, and proceeded towards an unfrequented hollow way, where high banks excluded the view on either side, a rugged soil wearied the feet of the walker, and nothing was to be seen at the end of the lane but the grey sea, at the moment undiversified by a single sail.

"I wonder you are not afraid to set foot in this dreary place, so alarmed as you were by these very people yesterday," observed Matilda to her companion, as they arrived in sight of a gipsy tent, spread on a patch of grass under shelter of the eastern bank. "I have been speculating all the way on when you would propose to turn back."

Elizabeth replied that she had visited the encampment before, without fear, knowing that the men were absent at this time of day, and that there was nothing to fear from the women and children.

"They assemble at meal times, I fancy," replied Mrs. Storey; "and there is the smoke of their cookery, you see."

The thin blue smoke was curling up around the trunk of a tree, in the hollow formed by whose roots was kindled the fire, which Trinity now hastened to feed with sticks from the hedges. She peeped into the pot, which steamed from under the three poles that supported it, and proceeded to stir the mess with a forked stick, affording glimpses to her visitors of

a sort of meat whose shape and colour were new to them. On their inquiring what the stew was made of, Trinity pointed to a skin which lay in the ditch, and which was undeniably that of a brown dog. Matilda expressed her horror, and the child looked up surprised, observing,

"Baba says the same hand made the dog and the sheep."

"Who is Baba?"

"Her father," replied Elizabeth. "Baba means Father. Where did you get this dog, Trinity? I hope it is not stolen."

Trinity believed Uriah had found it under the hedge. She took up the head, which was left with the skin, and showed by the teeth that the animal must have been very old.

"Dear me! I suppose you pick up all the dead animals that lie about the country," cried Elizabeth.

"Bebee says that beasts that have died by the hand of God are better than those that have died by the hand of man," replied Trinity.

A low moan issued from the tent at this moment, which seemed to strike the child with surprise and terror: she sprang upon her feet, and looked eagerly towards the curtain which hung over the entrance, but did not venture to go in. When Matilda inquired if any one within was sick, the girl shook her head, replying,

"No sickness, but there must be death. That is the death moan."

Mrs. Storey instantly proceeded to the tent, thinking that assistance might be wanted; and,

lifting up the awning, she saw Mrs. Draper standing beside the body of a very old woman, which was propped up in a sitting posture, and composed in attitude and countenance. Mrs. Draper's countenance was also calm, as she folded her arms in her red cloak, and rocked herself backwards and forwards, giving the death moan at intervals. After a certain number of repetitions, she turned to the ladies, and, in a voice of indifference, asked their business, glancing with a smile towards their palms. Elizabeth did not seem to share Matilda's surprise at this transition from one mood to another, but returned Mrs. Draper's smile, not ungloving her hand, but pointing out divers blemishes in the gloves she wore, and remarking,

“ What shocking gloves these are! I used to get beauties of gloves at Brighton. I wish I could get such here.”

“ We are only carriers,” observed the gipsy. “ You must walk a mile eastward to find a batman's wife.”

And she pointed significantly in the direction of Alexander's cottage. Elizabeth insinuated that carriers might be paid for their services in goods as well as the bat or bludgeon men, whose office it was to fight the battles of the smugglers while contraband goods were being landed and distributed. It appeared, however, that the gipsies preferred having their pay in money to loading themselves with more incumbrances than were necessary. It was plain that Elizabeth must apply elsewhere for gloves.

Matilda was meanwhile trying to tempt Trinity into the abode, in order to learn from her some particulars about the deceased, whose departure seemed to be borne by Mrs. Draper with such extraordinary composure: but Trinity still shrank from the sight of the dead, though willing enough to tell all she knew of her. She could only relate that this woman had been with the gang as long as Trinity could remember anything; that she had been blind all that time; and had been carried from place to place on a donkey, which was always led by the most careful person in the company. She had outlived all her relations, and had been tended by the Faas and Drapers only because there was no one else to take care of her. All her days had been spent in wandering, Trinity believed, as she had heard her say that it was seventy years since she had slept in a bed. It did not appear that her death had been immediately expected, as the men of the gang who were engaged as carriers, the preceding night, were gone to Brighton, and some other places a little way up the country; and when Trinity went to school that morning, she had left the old dame making cabbage nets, as usual. Mrs. Draper here took up an unfinished net, and said that it had dropped from the hands of the old woman half an hour before, when the fainting fit came on in which she had died. It was rather a pity, Mrs. Draper observed, that the departure had been so sudden, as the wake of the first night could scarcely be as honourable as they could wish. They must do their best to collect a

titude of mourners by the second night. Meanwhile, Trinity must summon as many of the tribe as were within reach ; and if the ladies would please to walk out of the tent, she would fasten down the curtain so that nobody could get in, and set the dog to watch while she went her ways.

It struck Matilda as rather strange to leave the body unguarded by human care at midday, in order to provide for its being watched at night by ten times as many persons as were necessary. There was nothing to be done, however, but to obey the gipsy's desire, as it was plain that the greatest offence that could be offered would be to propose to touch or to remain near the body.

As they bent their heads under the low hoop which supported the curtain at the entrance, Elizabeth foolishly remarked that it was very well the poor soul had not had a long illness in such a comfortless place.

" You that live in ceiled houses," replied Mrs. Draper, haughtily, " dwell as your fathers dwelt. So do we."

" But being ill and dying,—that is so different!"

" If we are content to die as our fathers died, who forbids?" persisted the gipsy, in a tone which silenced the objector. Mrs. Draper slightly returned the farewell of her visitors, and stood watching them till they were nearly out of sight, when she fastened the dog to one of the hoops of the tent, took off the stew, threw water on the fire, and climbed the bank, in order to pursue her way over the down in an opposite

direction from that along which Trinity was tripping.

Very different was the picture presented by the domestic establishment of the Alexanders, whom Elizabeth would not be restrained from visiting, in search of gloves, and with the hope of seeing many things besides which might delight her eyes, if her purse would not extend to the purchase of them. Matilda positively refused to accompany her, and walked on to pay a visit to her mother-in-law.

Mrs. Alexander was engaged with her young folks in tying the claws of the lobsters which had been caught that morning; a work requiring some dexterity, and assisted with some fear by the children, who were apt to start and let go at the critical moment, if the creature showed any disposition to friskiness. A technical question or two from Elizabeth sufficed to induce Mrs. Alexander to quit her task, wash her hands, and show her visiter into a light closet at the back of the cottage, where she promised to join her in a few minutes. Where she went Elizabeth had no idea; but she returned in ten minutes with an apron full of mysteries, and followed by two of her boys, bearing between them a package which was almost too large to be brought in at the narrow door. A girl was already seated on the outer door-sill, to give notice of the approach of any spy; and the eldest boy was directed to keep guard at the entrance of the closet, while apparently busy in carving his wooden boat of three inches long.

Mrs. Alexander intimated that besides gloves, she had an unusual choice of cambrics and silks, and a few pieces of valuable lace, out of which the lady might suit herself, if she chose, before the goods were sent up the country, as they were to be without delay. Elizabeth would not promise to buy, but, of course, accepted the invitation to examine; and then what tempting treasures were spread before her eyes!

"O lovely!" she cried. "What a colour! I wonder whether it would wear well. So delicate! so rich! There is nothing like those French for colours."

Mrs. Alexander, as in gratitude bound, joined in lauding the Lyons manufacturers, and their dyers.

"The hue is most beautiful, to be sure, but the fabric of this is better;—and this,—and this," she continued, applying the scientific touch to each in turn. "It seems to me that all the pieces of that one pattern,—the olive green, and the blue, and the violet,—are of a poorer fabric than the rest. But the figure is completely French, to be sure."

Mrs. Alexander observed that the Brighton ladies, and some at Hastings, had taken a great fancy to that particular pattern; and it was selling rapidly at some of the principal shops.

"Well, now, if I had seen those pieces at a shop,—if I had met with them anywhere but here, I should have pronounced them English. It is very odd that all of that one figure should have less substance than the others. Did they come over as part of the same cargo?"

"Stowed cheek-by-jowl in the hold of the lugger that was but six hours out of sight," Mrs. Alexander declared.

"I suppose they have been only just landed," observed Elizabeth, "for you would not keep such a stock as this by you, with so many enemies about. I wonder you are not afraid."

"It is only for a few hours, ma'am; just till the carriers come back from their present errand. I do not sell in any but a chance way, as you know, ma'am; and—"

"I always supposed your husband had been a batman, and I am told the batmen are often paid in goods," interrupted Elizabeth.

"In part, ma'am; but the greater portion of what is before you is here only on trust. We take care to keep them out of sight of the few whose business it is to ruin the coast; but, for that matter, the hands that served to land and stow ten times as much as all this, are enough to defend what is left. But the carriers will be back soon, and then—"

"And then they will have something else to do than to set off for Brighton again immediately,—if you mean the gipsies." And Elizabeth explained that they would have to attend the wake of the old woman, for two or three nights together.

This was such important news that Mrs. Alexander instantly sent one of the children in search of his father, and seemed now careless as to whether her visiter made a purchase or not. After selecting a package of gloves which was

too large for her pocket, and was therefore to be left behind till a favourable opportunity should occur of conveying them unseen, Elizabeth detained a two-inch pattern of the silk whose figure she most admired, and which was somewhat cheaper than the rest, from the inferiority of its quality. She must consult her mother, she declared, and should probably send an order for a quantity sufficient for two or three dresses. Her desire to obtain some of the benefits of this importation was enhanced by the woman's apparent indifference as to whether she indulged in a purchase. She resolved to make all speed homewards, and to persuade her mother, and, if possible, Matilda, to seize the opportunity of decking themselves in contraband fabrics.

She was not destined to arrive at home so soon as she imagined. Instead of Elizabeth, appeared a neighbour's child, breathless and excited, to request Matilda's immediate presence at a well-known house on the beach, and to urge the Lieutenant being sent for with all speed. It was plain that Elizabeth had been stopped by the Coast Guard, and conveyed by them to the house of the dame appointed to search all women who were suspected of having smuggled goods concealed about them. This was an act of audacity on the part of the guard that Matilda could not have anticipated, or she would have used more urgent persuasions with her sister-in-law against connecting herself in any way with the secret proceedings of the people about her. She was little aware that the adventure arose out of the

reprobation of Brady's punishment of the gipsy-boy, which she and Elizabeth had testified the day before.

Brady had seen Miss Storey enter the suspected house of Alexander ; he had remarked signs of movement within and about it during her stay ; and had watched her leaving it with a hurried step on the way home. Brady did not see why a lady should make a mockery of his office any more than a poor woman, to whom the temptation was greater ; and he was quite disposed to use his authority against one who had blamed him when he could not defend himself, and exposed him to be mobbed. He therefore planted himself directly in her path, on the beach, and requested her to deliver up the contraband articles which she was carrying about her.

The consciousness of what had just passed at Mrs. Alexander's deprived Elizabeth of the sense of innocence, and of that appearance of it which she might have justified by the fact that she had no smuggled goods about her person. She instantly thought of the pattern of silk, and tried to hide it, in a way which confirmed the suspicions of the fee. There was nothing for it but to go to the place appointed ; but, on the way, she bethought herself of sending a messenger for some of her family. She appeared in so great tribulation when Matilda arrived, as to leave little doubt of her being actually in the scrape ; and delay or evasion seemed therefore the best policy.

"Have you demanded to be taken before a magistrate ?" asked Matilda.

"A magistrate! La, no! How dreadful to think of going to a justice! I dare not, I am sure. 'Tis dreadful to think of."

"Not so dreadful as to put up with such a piece of audacity as this. If I were you, I would give these people as much trouble as possible in the business they have brought upon themselves, and make them heartily sick of it before they have done."

"Better not make such a fuss, and expose one's-self before all the folks on the way: better take it quietly," said the search-woman, holding open the door of the inner room appointed for the process. Elizabeth peeped into the room, and then looked at Matilda in restless dismay, declaring that she had nothing about her that she would not have produced in a moment to the guard, if he had asked her quietly, instead of bringing half the population about her heels.

"Then go to the magistrate, and tell him so," said Mrs. Storey, authoritatively. "It is a privilege which the law allows you; and an innocent person does wrong in not claiming it."

Elizabeth could not bring herself thus to oblige Brady to declare what reasons he had to suspect her. She doubted and hesitated, till her foes could and would wait no longer. She was searched, and nothing found, except, at the last moment, the pattern of silk, squeezed up in her glove. This discovery was very discomfiting to the ladies, and was made the most of by Brady, who held it up in the face of the Lieutenant, when that gentleman arrived, breathless, to as-

certain what disaster had befallen the ladies of his family.

"What! is that all you have got? I wish you joy of your share of the seizure," said he to Brady, pushing his hand aside. "I hope you will make more sure of your game the next time you abuse your duty to insult a lady."

Brady said he should discharge his office, let who would be the sufferer; and added, that he held in his hand what was a sufficient justification. He then proceeded to deposit the two inches of silk carefully in his tobacco-box.

"Let me look at it," demanded the Lieutenant. Brady glanced towards the fire, as if fearing that that was destined to be the next place of deposit for his precious snip. The Lieutenant laughed contemptuously, and walked to the farthest possible distance from the fire, still holding out his hand for the pattern.

"Why, man," said the officer, "you had better make haste to qualify yourself a little better for your business, or you will make yourself the laughing-stock of the place. This silk is no more French than your coat is Chinese. Here, take it back, and ask any knowing person you please, and you will find this was woven in Spitalfields or at Macclesfield."

Brady muttered something about "humbug;" and the search-woman became extremely anxious to explain that it was no part of her business to choose her victims: she had only to discharge her duty upon all who were brought to her. The Lieutenant silenced her by pushing past her, with

his wife and sister on each arm. The little crowd opened before them as they re-issued from the house, and closed again round Brady, to learn the result of his loyal enterprise. He was in too thorough an ill-humour to give them any satisfaction, anticipating (what, in fact, proved his fate) that he should be twitted with this deed for months to come, by every man, woman, and child who did 'not bear a due patriotic affection towards the Preventive Service.

The officer did not speak till it was time to deposit his sister at her own door.

"Now, Elizabeth," said he, "I hope this will prove a lesson to you. You and my mother came to live here on my account, and on my account you must go away again, unless you can bring your practices into agreement with my duties. It is a lucky chance for you that that rag is of English make, or——"

"Oh, brother! do you really think it is not a French silk?"

"To be sure, or I should not have said so," replied the Lieutenant, with much displeasure in his tone. "If I chose to tell lies to screen you, you might stay here, following your own fancies, till doomsday. It is because I always will speak the truth about those who belong to me that I request you to go away, if you must do things which make the truth painful for you to hear and for me to tell."

"Well, my good sir, do not be in a passion. I only thought you were telling a convenient fib, such as everybody tells about such matters, in the Custom-house and out of it."

"Not everybody, as you now find," replied the officer; "and I hope this is the last time you will expose me to the suspicion of fibbing in your behalf."

Matilda half withdrew her arm from her husband's, terrified at a mode and strength of rebuke which would have almost annihilated her; but Elizabeth bore it with wonderful indifference, wishing him good morning, as on ordinary days.

"She is a good creature," the Lieutenant observed, in his customary phrase, after walking on a few paces in silence. "She is a good creature, but monstrously provoking sometimes. A pretty scrape she had nearly got herself and all of us into."

"Remember how lately it was that you were defending the desire for foreign commodities in general, and Elizabeth's in particular," observed Matilda.

"Well! all that I said was very true, I believe," replied the officer, half laughing under a sense of his own inconsistency. "I have as firm a faith as ever in the truth of what I then said."

"Your doctrine, then, is, that Elizabeth is right in having the desire, and in gratifying it; but that she is wrong in being caught in the fact."

"Why, it does come pretty nearly to that, I am afraid. It comes to the fact that duties clash in a case like this; so that, one's conscience being at fault, an appeal to the law must settle the matter. I see no crime in Elizabeth's taste, apart from the means she may take to gratify it;

but the law pronounces her wrong, so we must conclude she is wrong."

" Duties do, indeed, clash," replied Matilda ; " and if so painfully in one case, what must be the extent of the evil if we consider all who are concerned ? Even in this little neighbourhood, here is Mr. Pim unable to teach honour, as he says, without giving the notion that it is a merit to conceal fraud, and pointing out a whole class as objects of contempt and hatred. The dwellers near, almost to a man, look upon the government as a ~~tyrant~~, its servants as oppressors, its laws as made to be evaded, and its powers defied. Oaths are regarded as mere humbug ; and the kindest of social feelings are nourished in direct relation to fraud, and pleaded as its sanction. There is not a man near us who does not feel it necessary, nor a woman who does not praise it as virtuous, nor a child who is not trained up in the love and practice of it. This is the morality which one institution teaches from village to village all along our shores,—mocking the clergyman, setting at nought the schoolmaster, and raising up a host of enemies to the government by which it is maintained ; and all for what ?"

" To help us in our national money matters, in which, in truth, it does not very well succeed," observed the Lieutenant.

" And to protect the interests of certain classes of its subjects," replied Matilda, " in which, if most people say true, they succeed as little."

" Spitalfields is in a worse state than ever," observed the Lieutenant ; " and there are ter-

rible complaints from our glovers and our lace-makers."

"And if not," continued Matilda—"if protection availed to these people, the case would be very little better than it is now. Money prosperity is desirable only as it is necessary to some higher good,—to good morals and happiness; and if it were, in fact, secured to our glovers, and silkmen, and lace-makers, it would be purchased far too dear at the expense of the morals of such a multitude as are corrupted by our restrictive laws. There can be nothing in the nature of things to make the vexation and demoralization of some thousands necessary to the prosperity of other thousands. Providence cannot have appointed to governments such a choice of evils as this; and——"

"And you, my dear, for your share, will therefore withhold your allegiance from a government which attempts to institute such an opposition."

"It is rather too late an age of the world for me to turn rebel on that ground," replied Matilda, smiling. "Such governments as we were speaking of are dead and gone, long ago. Our government is not granting any new protections or prohibitions, surely!"

"But I thought you would quarrel with it for not taking away those which exist. I thought you would give it your best blessing if they sent an order to all us Preventive people to vacate our station-houses and march off."

"I certainly felt more disaffected to-day than ever in my life before," observed Matilda. "To

think that, in a country like this, anybody may be stopped and searched upon mere suspicion!"

"With the privilege of demanding the decision of a magistrate, remember."

"Which magistrate may order the search, if he finds sufficient ground of suspicion. And this outrage is to take place as a very small part of the machinery for protecting the interests of certain classes, to the great injury of all the rest; and especially, as many of themselves say, to their own. It makes one indignant to think of it."

"It is the law, my love; and while it exists, it must be obeyed. I must order my men to stop you, if you should chance to sympathize in Elizabeth's tastes. Hey, Matilda?"

"Do, by all means, when you find me smuggling; but perhaps my share of the temptation may soon be at an end. I trust all this distress that you speak of will end in bringing into an active competition with foreigners those of our people who are now sitting with their hands before them, perceiving how the gentry of England are apparelled in smuggled goods. No fear for our occupation, you know. There will still be brandy and tobacco, on which, as we do not grow them ourselves, government will call for so high a duty as will encourage smuggling. No prospect of your being useless yet a while."

"Nor of our neighbours being as loyal as you would have them."

"Nor of their living at peace, and in 'frank honesty'."

"Nor of Pim's making his scholars moral."

"Nor of our manufacturers having fair play."

"Nor of the same justice being done to the revenue. Alas ! how far we are from perfection!"

"Yet ever tending towards it. Unless we believe this, what do we mean by believing in a Providence ? since all evidence goes to prove that its rule is infinite progression. Yes, we are tending upwards, though slowly ; and we shall find, when we arrive in sight of comparative perfection, that a system of restriction which debases and otherwise injures all parties concerned, is perfectly inconsistent with good government."

"Then shall I have earned my dinner in some other, and, I trust, a pleasanter, way than to-day," observed the Lieutenant. "I shall never get reconciled to my office, Matilda, especially while I hear of brother officers abroad—"

"Oh ! you are dreading your patrol to-night, because it is beginning to snow," said Matilda, smiling. "You shall go in, and fortify yourself with some duty-paid brandy and untaxed water ; and then, if you will let me go with you again, we will defy the smugglers as manfully as if they were to be the enemies of good order for evermore."

"You shall not go out in the dark again, my love. It took all my manfulness from me to see you so near the edge of the cliff in a wind which might drive you out as if you were a sea-gull. The place looks scarcely fit for you on the brightest of days ; you have no chance out of doors on a gusty night."

CHAPTER VI.

A NIGHT WATCH.

THE night of the gipsy late-wake was one of the clearest and coldest moonlight. Such a night,—when the smallest skiff showed black on the glistening sea, and every sailing bird cast its shadow on the chalky cliff, and each stationary figure on the heights exhibited a hard outline against the sky,—was little fit for smuggling adventure ; yet the officers of the Coast Guard had a strong impression that a landing of contraband goods was to be attempted, in defiance of the lady moon, and of the watchers who “ blessed her useful light.” A gipsy festival afforded an excellent pretext for collecting the country people in sufficient force to brave the guard ; and it was suspected that the people themselves thought so, as tidings of the festival were most industriously spread through all the country, and certainly very eagerly received. Lieutenant Storey held consultations with his brother officers at all the stations near ; and every precaution was taken to enable a great force to assemble with speed at the points where it seemed pretty certain that a landing would be attempted. One or two trusty men were sent to overlook the wake from a height, that they might report the numbers and apparent disposition of the people ; and Lieutenant Storey visited these men on their posts soon after the beginning of the ceremony.

" Well ! what news ?" said Matilda, anxiously, as the Lieutenant entered the room where his wife, mother, and sister were waiting supper for him.

" Why, it is a fine freezing night," he replied, rubbing his hands, and accepting the seat which was offered him close by the blazing fire. " So you have Elizabeth to keep you company, as I advised you. That is very well, as I rather think you will not be persuaded to go to bed till late. And you, too, mother ! Who would have thought of your climbing up to us so late in the day ?"

" But the gipsies !" cried the ladies. " Did you see the wake ?"

" I heard more than I saw of it ; for the banks are so high that one could only catch a glimpse of a few heads now and then. But there was a strong glare from their torches, there being little moonlight, I suppose, in the hollow way : and their noise is really inconceivable. Such yelling and howling, and what I suppose they call singing ! They will wake up all the sheep in the pens for a mile round."

" I am afraid there are a great many collected," observed Matilda.

" I should think there must be, for I never heard any gabble or din to compare with it, except when the wind and the sails are wrangling in a storm at sea. But come, let us have supper. I must be gone again presently ; and this is not an air to take away one's appetite."

His mother inquired whether they could learn anything of the progress of events by looking

out of the windows, or whether they must wait for news till his return. He replied,

" You will see nothing by going to the window but as fine a moonlight sea as ever you saw ; and the light-house, and perhaps poor Nicholas staring about him, as he is bound to do. If there is any affray, it will be far out of your sight. We keep our eyes upon Birling and Crowlink Gap. Either of them is an easy place of rendezvous from the wake. You will be as still as death here, and I advise you all to go to sleep till I knock you up to let me in."

The mother and sister wondered what he thought they could be made of to go to bed at such a time. Matilda piled fresh logs on the fire, and looked to see that the lamp was trimmed.

" I'll tell you what,—I'll desire Nicholas to come, from time to time, to tell you whether he hears or sees anything or nothing," said the Lieutenant. " I have put him on the nearest beat, where I am pretty sure of his having nothing to do ; and he can just step to the gate, if you like to be at the trouble of hearing that he has nothing to tell."

" Do be less presumptuous, my dear son," said Mrs. Storey. " How dare you make sure of nothing happening ?"

" It was only a hasty word, mother. I have not been presumptuous in reality, as you would say if you saw how completely we are prepared. More ale, if you please, Elizabeth. And now, I must not stay any longer. I shall be sure to tell Nicholas : but you will not detain him from his post."

Matilda ran out before him to have his parting kiss at the gate, and to watch him out of sight. The full light from the beacon turned at the moment upon her face, stronger than the moon-light, and showed that tears were upon her cheek.

"I cannot scold you, love," said her husband, as he wiped them away. "I do pity you women that have to sit waiting at home when anything is to happen. I could fancy myself crying like a baby if I were obliged to do so. But go in now, there's a good girl."

"The moment you are out of sight. I suppose you really cannot tell,—you cannot even tell me,—when you are likely to be home again."

"Impossible. It may be two hours, or it may be twelve."

Matilda had only to pray that it might be two, while she watched her husband on his way to Nicholas's boat, where he stopped to speak with the figure perched upon the brow of the cliff. Presently the figure might be seen to touch its hat; the Lieutenant waved his hand towards the station-house, and speedily disappeared, leaving Matilda to re-enter the parlour, whose clear fire, double windows, and listed doors she would willingly have exchanged for the biting air on Hotcombe Flat, by her husband's side.

During the hour which elapsed before Nicholas lifted the latch of the gate, whose welcome click brought all the ladies to the door, Matilda had wished twenty times that she was alone. Elizabeth was full of groundless fears of her own devising, while she ridiculed those of other people;

and Mrs. Storey gave a lecture on patience every time Matilda moved on her chair, looking up in her face with all possible anxiety, however, at each return from an excursion to the upper windows. The methodical Nicholas was more tiresome still. He began with an explanation of what his orders were about giving intelligence to the ladies, and of his purpose in now appearing before them. He proceeded with an account of where he had stood, and how he had looked round and listened, and what he had been thinking about; and it was only at the last that it came out that he had seen and heard nothing particular.

“ And do you think you could hear a pistol-shot from Birling Gap, or from so far as Crowlink Gap ? ”

Nicholas could not answer for it, having never heard a pistol fired from either place while on duty on his present beat; but he soon recollect ed that his officer had told him that it was a very calm night, and that he could certainly be able to hear the sound in question from the farthest of the Seven Sisters; and therefore Nicholas fully believed that he should hear a pistol as soon as fired.

“ Very well,” said Matilda, venturing upon such a breach of discipline as handing him a glass of ale. “ Now we will not detain you: we were desired not; but come again in an hour, and sooner, if anything happens.”

Nicholas’s heart, which was always warm towards the lady, was rarefied by the honours and benefits of this night. To be appointed, in some

sort, her special servant,—to be treated with kind words from her lips, and with ale from her own hands,—was enough, in combination with the ale itself, to raise his spirits to the highest pitch of which, as a sober man, he was capable. He could scarcely refrain from whistling as he went back to his beat, and was actually guilty of humming “Rules Britannia,” as he flung himself down in a sort of niche on the very brow of the dizzy cliff, whence he was wont to gaze abroad over the expanse.

“‘ Rule, Britannia !’—Ay, that lady is worth a thousand of the bigger and smarter one, and the old one too, if a poor man may think so.—‘ Britannia rule the waves.’—Hoy, hoy ! where did this sloop come from, that I did not see her before ? She’s waiting for an early cargo of chalk, I’ll be bound ; but it is odd I did not see her before, only that she lies so close under, one could not see without looking over. ‘ And come again in an hour,’ says she, ‘ or sooner, if anything happens.’ I wonder how the hour goes.—‘ Britons never shall be slaves !’—If I had my mother’s old watch, now ! Bless her ! she’s now asleep, I suppose, in the bed with the green checked curtains. She says she thinks of me in her prayers, and has all the sea before her as she goes to sleep, and me marching above it, helping to guard the nation.—‘ Britannia rule the waves !’—It is only a fair turn for me to think of her when she is asleep, as I hope she is now. Lord ! how she used to beat me ! and all, as she says now, for tenderness, to make a great man of me.

To be sure, I never guessed it at the time.— ' Britons never shall be slaves ! Never ! never ! ' I don't know that I had not best walk ; it is so different sitting here from what it is when the sun is out, plaiting straw for my hat. It is time I had a new hat ; I thought I saw the lady glancing at it. Think of her taking notice of such little things ! Kind heart ! ' Come again within the hour,' says she, ' and sooner, if anything happens.' That's she looking out, I warrant, where there is a little bit of light from the window. There ! 'tis gone. 'Tis the will of Providence that she should notice me so. I wish she knew how my mother thinks of me : but that is no doing of mine, either ; it is the will of Providence too ; and I doubt whether anybody is so happy as, by the will of Providence, I am, with my mother, and the people here all so harmless to me, and the lady ! And it is something to see such a bright sea as this, so like what I saw in the show-box at Weyhill fair, when my mother treated me, then a young boy. I am sure everybody is wonderfully kind to me. I wonder how the hour goes. It is bitter cold, to be sure ; and I think yon bit of shelter is best, after all.— ' Britons never, ne --- ver—— ' "

And Nicholas once more crouched in his recess, where he rocked himself to the music of the waves, and looked in vain over the wide expanse for the smallest dark speck, in watching which he might find occupation. He soon found that his observation would have been better bestowed nearer home. While walking, he had

disdained the well-worn path along the chalk line, strewed within a few feet of the ~~verge~~ for the guidance of the watchers on dark nights. As it was light enough for safety, he availed himself of the opportunity of varying his beat, and trod the less bare path from the chalk line to the very edge of the cliff. He had looked straight before him, whether his back was turned north or south, giving no attention to the right hand or the left. He had also been too hasty in his conclusion that the vessel which lay below, in the deep, broad shadow of the cliffs, was a chalk sloop, waiting for the tide.

By leaning forwards a little, any one in Nicholas's present seat could command a view of a winding and perilous, almost perpendicular, track, which ascended from the spot where the gypsies had assisted at the last unloading of a smuggling vessel. Something like rude steps occurred at small intervals in this track; but they were so imperfect, and it was so steep, that the assistance of either ropes or mutual support was necessary to those who would mount, with or without a load on their shoulders. As the tide had till now been too high to permit access to this spot by the beach, it was one of the last in which Nicholas could have expected to see foes. For want of something to do, he picked two or three flints out of a layer which was bedded in the chalk within reach, and amused himself with sending them down the steep, in order to watch what course they would take. Leaning over, to follow with his eye the vagaries of one of these, his ear

was struck by a bumping, dead sound, which could not be caused by his flint. Looking a little to the right, without drawing back, he perceived something moving in the shadowy track. But for the sound which had excited his suspicions, he would have concluded that some cliff-raven or sea-bird had been disturbed in its hole, and he watched intently for a few seconds to discover whether this was not the case ; but it soon became evident to his sharpened sight that there was a line of men laboriously climbing the track, each with his two small tubs braced upon his shoulders. Whether they had a strong rope by which each might help himself, or whether each supported the one above him, could not be discovered from the distance at which Nicholas sat ; nor could he guess whether they were aware of his being so near.

He started up, and stood in the broad moonlight, fumbling for his pistol, which was not quite so ready to his hand as it ought to have been. A subdued cry spread up and down, from mouth to mouth, among his foes, a large body of whom appeared instantly on the ridge, from the hollow where they had collected unobserved. One of them cried,—

“ Hand over your pistol, lad, and sit down quietly where you were, and we will do you no harm.”

To do anything but what his officer had desired was, however, too confusing to Nicholas's faculties to be borne. The order to fire as soon as smugglers were perceived came upon his

mind, as if spoken at the moment in the Lieutenant's own voice, and saved him the trouble of all internal conflict. He fired, and was instantly fired upon in turn, and wounded. As he staggered far enough back from the verge to fall on safe ground, he had the consolation of hearing (after the cloud of flapping sea-birds had taken themselves far out to sea) a repetition of shots along the cliffs on either hand, fainter and shorter in the increasing distance. The ominous roll of the drum,—the most warlike signal of the smugglers,—was next heard from the hollow to the right, and more sea-birds fluttered and screamed. Silence was gone; the alarm was given; and poor Nicholas need not resist the welcome faintness that stretched him on the grass.

The smugglers, annoyed by former repeated failures in their attempts to intimidate or gain over the Preventive watch, were now exasperated by Nicholas's unflinching discharge of his duty; and they determined to make an example of him, even in the midst of their preparations to resist the force which they knew to be on the way to attack them. The first necessary precaution was to range the batmen who had been collected by the sound of the drum, in two rows, from the vessel to the foot of the cliff, and again from the verge of the cliffs to where the carts were stationed, surrounded with guards. This being done, their pieces loaded, and their bludgeons shouldered, a small party was detached to take possession of the wounded man. On raising him, it was found that he was not dead, and that it

was by no means certain that his wounds were mortal. When he recovered his senses, he felt himself lifted from the ground by a rope tied round his middle, and immediately after was being lowered over the edge of the precipice, carefully protected from being dashed against the face of the cliff by the men who stood at regular distances down the track, and who handed him from one to the other till he reached the bottom, where two stout men received him, and supported him on either side to a little distance along the shingle.

"What are you going to do with me?" he faintly asked; but they made no answer.

"For God's sake spare my life!"

"Too late for that, lad," replied one.

"No, not too late," said Nicholas, with renewed hope. "I don't think you have killed me. I shall get well, if you will let me go."

"Too late, lad. You should not have fired."

"You are going to murder me then," groaned the victim, sinking down upon a large stone where he had often leaned before, it being the one from which he was wont to look out to sea. "I did not expect it of you, for your people have always behaved very well to me. Everybody has been kind to me," he continued, his dying thoughts getting into the train which the spot suggested. "But, if you will do me one more kindness, do, some of you, tell the lady at the station why I could not come as she bade me. 'Come within the hour,' says she——"

He stopped short on hearing two pistols cocked

successively. No duty to be done under orders being immediately present to his mind, a paroxysm of terror seized him. He implored mercy for his mother's sake, and, with the words upon his lips, sank dead before the balls were lodged in his body as in a mark.

The proceeding was witnessed by some of his comrades, and by his officer, from the top of the cliff; and fierce were the cries and numerous were the shots which followed the murderous party, as they quickly took up the body, and fell back among the crowd of smugglers within the deep shadow where they could no longer be distinguished.

The party being three hundred strong, any resistance which the Preventive Force could offer was of little avail to check their proceedings, as long as they were disposed to carry them on. They persevered for some time in landing, hoisting up, and carting away their tubs, the batmen keeping line, and frequently firing, while the carriers passed between with their burdens. At length, a shot from one of the guard, which took more effect than was expected, seemed to occasion some change in their plans. They drew in their apparatus, ascended the track in order, bearing with them the bodies of their slain or wounded companions, and formed round the carts, in order to proceed up the country, deserting a portion of the cargo which was left upon the shore. The vessel, meanwhile, hoisted sail, and wore round to stand out to sea.

“ Can you see how many are killed or dis-

abled?" inquired the Lieutenant of one of his men. "What is this they are hauling along?"

"Two bodies, sir; whether dead or not, I can't say."

"Not poor Nicholas's for one, I suppose."

"No, sir; they have both their faces blacked, I see."

"We must get Christian burial for Nicholas, if it be too late to save him," said the Lieutenant to his men, who were boiling with rage at the fate of their comrade.

"They have pitched him into the sea, no doubt, sir, unless they have happened to leave him on the beach as a mockery."

The procession passed with their load, like a funeral train; and to stop them would only have occasioned the loss of more lives. There were no stragglers to be cut off, for they kept their corps as compact as if they had been drilled into the service, and practised in an enemy's country. It was, in fact, so. They had been trained to regular defiance of laws which they had never heard spoken of but in terms of hatred; and whenever the agents of government were around their steps, they felt themselves in the midst of enemies.

When the smugglers had proceeded so far inland as to be out of danger, they made a halt, and gave three cheers,—an exasperating sound to the baffled guard.

"Let them cheer!" cried the Lieutenant, "our turn will come next. Down to the beach, my lads, before the tide carries off what belongs

to you there. If any of you can find tracks of blood, it may not be too late for poor Nicholas, after all. Down to the beach, and seize whatever you can find."

He remained for a few moments on the steep, ranging the horizon with his glass, internally cursing the rapid progress that the lugger (which few but Nicholas would have taken for a sloop, however deep the shadow) was making in her escape.

"The cutter always contrives to be just in the wrong place," thought he, "or to arrive too late when called. She will come, as she did before, full sail, as soon as the smuggler has got out of sight, and changed her course."

On joining his men, he found they had partly recovered their spirits, amidst the booty which lay before their eyes. Some few had given their first attention to searching for the body of their comrade, but the greater number were insisting on the necessity of removing the seizure to the Custom-house, before the tide should have risen any higher. It was already washing up so as to efface any marks of blood which might have remained on the shingle; and it seemed most probable, in the absence of any clue, that the body of Nicholas was being dashed in the surf which sent its spray among those who defied its advances to the last, before they mounted once more upon the down. They were obliged to leave a few tubs floating, after they had secured the goods which it was most important to keep dry. If these kegs could hold together amidst the

dashing of the waves, they would be recoverable in the morning from the sea, as the law forbade all floating tubs to be picked up by anybody but the Coast Guard, and the watch on the shore could keep an eye on the observance of the law, for the short time that would be necessary.

"Brady, post off to the station-house, and let the ladies know we are all safe but one. Stay! You will not thank me for sending you away from your booty; and, besides, they will not believe you. I must go myself. Halt a minute, my lads."

The officer directed his steps to the gleam which shone out through the curtain of Matilda's window. Though he found her voiceless, and his mother and sister in a state of restless terror, he could not stay to revive them. The firing had seemed to them so fearful that they would scarcely credit the testimony of their own eyes that the Lieutenant was safe, or his assurance that only one life had been lost on the side of the Preventive Force. He did not say whose life that was, for he knew that there was not a man under his command whom his wife would miss more than poor Nicholas. This painful communication he left to the morning. With an assurance that the enemy had all marched off, and that no dangerous duty remained, the officer entreated his family to go to rest. It was very probable that he might not come home till daylight, and it would now be folly to waste any more anxiety upon him.

Elizabeth thought it really would be very foolish,

though she declared she did not expect to sleep a wink for a month to come. She began her preparations, however, by putting up her work with alacrity, and lighting her mother to her bedroom. Matilda went also to hers, but not to remain. As soon as all was quiet, she stole down to the fire-side, laid wood upon the embers, put out her light, and sat down, preferring a further watch to broken dreams. The crackling of the fuel and the ticking of the time-piece composed her agitated thoughts ; but, instead of cheerfulness, a deep melancholy succeeded to the internal tumult of so many hours—a melancholy which grew with that it fed on.

Matilda had not hitherto been given to deep thought, or strong feeling, for any one but her husband ; but the new influences of circumstance, of late suspense and fear, of the hour, and of her present social position,—all combined to stimulate her to higher reflection than, as a light-hearted girl, she had been wont to encourage. She would fain have known which of the men had fallen,—what home was to be made desolate by the tidings that must soon be on their way. Were they to stun the young wife who, like herself, had—O, no ! It was too dreadful to think of ! Were they to smite the matron, who, in her Irish cabin, daily told the little ones around her knee tales of the brave and tender father who was to come back and caress them one day ? Were they to wither the aged parent, who prayed for his roving son, and looked for the return of the prodigal before he died ; or the band of young

kindred who watched with longing the glory of their elder brother, and would be struck dumb at this ignoble close of his envied service ? Whoever it was, a life was gone ! And how ? Men of the same country, members of the same social state, had been made enemies by arbitrary laws. They had been trained to deceive and to defy one another when they should have wrought, side by side, to nourish life instead of to destroy it,—to strengthen peace instead of inflicting woe. He who made the human heart to yearn at the voice of kindness, and to leap up at the tone of joy, thereby rebukes the system which gives birth to mutual curses, and flings sorrows into many homes ;—He who gradually discloses to the roused human ear the music of His name, does it for other purposes than to have it taken upon human lips in mockery as a pass-word to the meanest frauds ;—He who made yon glittering sea a broad path by which his children might pass to and fro, so that the full may bear bread to the hungry, and the skilful send clothing to the naked, must pity the perverseness by which such mutual aid is declined, or yielded only at the expense of crime—artificial crime, which brings on natural, as its sure consequence ;—He who scatters his bounties over the earth with impartial hand, his snow and sunshine, his fruits and gems ;—He who lets loose his herds on the plains of the tropics, and calls the fishy tribes into the depths of Polar seas ;—He who breathes upon the corn-fields, and they wave ; who whispers among the pine-forests of the North, and they bow before

him,—thus works that men may impart and enjoy ; and yet man will not impart, and forbids his fellow-man to enjoy ;—He who in still small voice says to the Hindoo beneath the palm-tree, “ Get thee a home ;” who visits the broken sleep of the toil-worn artizan to bid him get food and rest ; who comes in the chill wind to the shivering boor to warn him to provide apparel ; who scares the crouching Arab with thunders among the caverned rocks, and the Greenlander with tempests on the icy sea, and the African with wild beasts in the sultry night, that out of their terror may arise mutual protection and social ease,—is daringly gainsaid by intermeddlers, who declare that one nation shall have scanty food, and another miserable clothing ; and that a third must still find holes in the rocks, or a refuge in the trees, because neither wood nor iron shall be given for habitations. Shall there not come a day when the toil-worn Briton shall complain, “ I was hungry, and ye gave me no food ;” and the Pole, “ I was naked, and ye clothed me not ;” and the Syrian wanderer, “ I was houseless, and ye sheltered me not ;” and the gem-decked hungering savage, “ I was poor and miserable, and ye visited me not, nor let me enrich you in return ?” When will men learn that the plan of Divine Providence indicates the scheme of human providence ; that man should distribute his possessions as God scatters his gifts ; that, as man is created for kindness and for social ease, he should be governed so as to secure them ; that, as all interests naturally harmonize under a law

of impartial love, it is an impiety to institute a law of partiality, by which interests are arbitrarily opposed ? When will men learn that it should be with their wrought as with their natural wealth,—that, as the air of heaven penetrates into all hidden places, and nourishes the life of every breathing thing, all the elements of human comfort should expand till they have reached and refreshed each partaker of human life ; that as the seeds of vegetation are borne here and there by gales, and dropped by birds upon ridges and into hollows, the means of enjoyment should be conveyed to places lofty or lowly in the social scale, whence the winged messengers may return over the deep with an equal recompense ? When will governments learn that they are responsible for every life which is sacrificed through a legislation of partiality ; whether it be of a servant of its own, murdered by rebellious hands, or of a half-nourished babe dying on its sickly mother's knee, or of a spirit-broken merchant, or of a worn-out artizan ? When will the people learn that, instead of acquiescing in the imposition of oaths which they mean to break, of a watch which they permit to be insulted and slaughtered, of a law which they bring up their children to despise and to defy, they should demand with one voice that freedom in the disposal of the fruits of their toil, upon which mutual interest is a sufficient check, while it proves a more unfailing stimulus than any arbitrary encouragement given to one application of industry at the expense of all others ? When shall we leave the natural

laws which guide human efforts as they guide the stars in their courses to work, without attempting to mend them by our bungling art? When shall man cease to charge upon Providence evils of his own devising, and pray for deliverance from the crimes he himself has invented, and from the miseries which follow in their train? We implore that there may be no murder, and put firelocks into the hands of our smugglers. We profess our piety, and hold the Bible to unhallored lips in our custom-houses. We say "Avaunt!" to all that is infernal when we bring our children to the font, and straightway educate them to devilish subtlety and hatred. We weekly celebrate our love for our whole race, and yet daily keep back a portion of the universal inheritance of man. O, when will man come in singleness of heart before his Maker, and look abroad upon His works in the light of His countenance!

Matilda's eyes were shining tearful in the fire-light when her husband entered.

"Hey! tears, my love? I saw no tears when there was more cause,—two hours ago."

"I had no time for them then," said Matilda, brushing them away.

"And why now? Do you dread more such nights, or are you worn out, or—"

"No, no; it was not for myself. It was shame.—O, I am so ashamed!"

"Of me, love? Do not you like my duty? or, do I not perform it well?"

"O, no, no. I am so ashamed at the whole

world, and especially at our own nation, which thinks itself so Christian. Here we send one another out man-hunting. We make a crime, tempt a man into it, and punish him for it. Is this Christian?"

"It would be a disgrace to paganism."

"We are proud of being made in God's image, and we take pains to make human governments the reverse of the Divine. How dare we ask a blessing upon them?"

"Come, come, my good girl, you must think of something more cheerful. The hearing of a life being lost has been too much for you. You never were so near the scene of a murder before, I dare say."

"Never," replied Matilda, with quivering lips.

"It will not affect you so much again. You will become more used to the circumstances of such a situation as ours. You will feel this sort of adventure less painfully henceforward."

"But I do not wish that," was all that Matilda chose to say, lest her sorrow should be charged upon discontent with her individual lot. She looked out once more upon the sea, darkening as the moon went down, and satisfied herself that the time would come for which she had been inquiring,—when man would look above and around him, and learn of Providence.

CHAPTER VII.

HEAR THE NEWS !

ALL was bustle about the nearest Custom-house when the seized vessel and goods were expected to arrive the next morning. The magistracy in the neighbourhood were also busy, for there seemed to be no end to the offences against the law which had arisen out of the adventure of the preceding night.

The first steps taken were towards the discovery of the murderer of Nicholas ; and, for this purpose, application was made to government for aid, in the shape both of police-officers and of an offer of reward for the disclosure of the murderers. Little was hoped from the latter proceeding, as the smugglers were known to yield powerful protection to each other, and to be united by a bond of honour as strongly in each other's defence as against the law. If Nicholas's murderers were known to every dweller along the coast, from Portsmouth to the North Fore-land, there was little probability that any one would step forward to name or lay hands on them. But, the little that government could do, —pry about and offer bribes, was done ; and, whether or not the guilty persons might tremble or flee, every body else laughed.

One of the gipsy band was brought up before two justices of the peace on violent suspicion of

having, after eight in the evening, and before six in the morning, made, aided, or assisted in making, or been present at making, a signal, by means of light, fire, flash, blaze, signal by smoke, and so forth, through all the offences described in the appropriate clause of that most singular statute ordained for the prevention of smuggling. No proof could be brought, though the truth of the charge was generally believed, and the gipsies thereby became more popular than ever. They were dismissed, and every body laughed.

A boy was brought up, on a charge of trespass, by a farmer, who complained that his fenced land had been entered and trampled, and his well and bucket made use of without leave. The boy pleaded that he had entered for the purpose of putting out a fire which he suspected to be intended for a signal to smugglers. The justices referred to the statute, found that "it shall be lawful," &c., to commit this kind of trespass, and that the boy had only done his duty. And now, every body frowned.

A woman who had been caught standing near a tub of the spirits which had been seized, which tub was staved, was brought up on the charge of having staved the same. The penalty was so heavy as to tempt to a vast deal of false swearing on her behalf, by dint of which she escaped; and her friends and neighbours laughed again. She was not the less glad of this issue that, being a poor person, she would have been supported while in prison by a daily allowance drawn from the pockets of the nation.

A crew of fishermen were summoned to show cause why they should not, according to law, pay the treble value of a floating keg of gin, which, having bumped against their boat at sea, they had stretched out their hands to appropriate. There was no use in denying the act, as it had been witnessed by two keen eyes through unimpeachable glasses, from a headland. All that the fishermen could do was to swear that they only meant to deliver over the spirits to the Custom-house officers, and were prevented from doing so by being arrested immediately on landing. The magistrates considered this a very doubtful case ; and, having before their eyes the fear of the collective power of their smuggling neighbours, gave their decision in favour of the fishermen ; whereat the informers were indignant, and the folks in waiting exulted.

All parties had by this time had enough of this ceremony ; but the justices agreed in assuring the Lieutenant, that if they chose to look strictly into the proceedings of their neighbours, and to inflict all the punishments ordained in the statute for all the modes of offence specified therein, they might be constantly occupied from morning till night ; the gaols would be filled ; there would be a restraint for penalties in almost every cottage, and offenders would be nearly as common as persons who stood above five feet in their shoes. They entertained him with a sight of the entire statute, as he was not acquainted with the whole ; and all thought it perfectly consistent with their exemplary loyalty to decide that it was truly an

extraordinary specimen of legislation. The justices could no more boast of the achievements of their authority in putting down smuggling than the officer of his efficiency in preventing it. All shook their heads, complimented each other's exertions, and desponded about the availability of their own.

“What is to be done?” was the commonplace query which ensued.

“Why, you see,” said one of the justices, “the prohibiting a commodity does not take away the taste for it; and if you impose a high duty, you only excite people to evade it, and to calculate the average rate of the risk of detection. That being done, there will always be abundance of speculators found to make the venture, and no lack of customers to bid them God speed.”

“Then there are two ways of demolishing the practice,—lowering the duties, so as to remove the temptation to smuggling; and increasing the difficulty of carrying on a contraband trade.”

“I should say there is but one,” replied the first speaker. “Difficulties have been multiplied till we who have to administer the law groan under them, and smuggling is still on the increase.”

“What is government about all the time?” asked the Lieutenant. “They must know this, and yet they let their own power be mocked, and the interests of our manufacturers and commercial men be sacrificed.”

“Of our manufacturers, but not necessarily of all our commercial men. Contraband trade is a

fine thing for certain shopkeepers ; and you might hear some curious stories below there," (nodding towards the Custom-house,) " about certain methods of obtaining drawbacks, and then re-landing the goods by the help of our night-working neighbours. However, government is getting a glimpse of the true state of the case, as we shall soon see."

" Because," observed the other magistrate, " government is beginning to look to the right quarter for information. It is nonsense to consult collectors of the revenue, and persons in their interest and of their way of thinking, about the best method of rendering taxes effectual. The only way is to contemplate the interests of the tax payers. This done, it is easily seen that there is not much wisdom in a system, the enforcement alone of which costs the country many hundred thousand pounds a year."

" And which is not enforced, after all, and never can be. No, no ; the government sees now that the only way is to lower the duties down to the point which makes contraband trading a speculation not worth attempting."

" What makes you suppose that government views the matter in this light ?"

" It is said, and confidently believed in London, that government has taken into consideration this petition from the principal silk-manufacturers in and about London."

The Lieutenant read the petition in the newspaper, of recent date, now handed to him.

" Hum. ' This important manufacture, though

recently considerably extended,'—aye, so it ought to be, from the increasing number of wearers of silk,—‘ is still depressed below its natural level’—they are tired of Spitalfields subscriptions, I suppose, and of living among starving weavers, who throw the blame of their starvation on their masters ;—‘ by laws which prevent it from attaining that degree of prosperity which, under more favourable circumstances, it would acquire.’—Well ! what thinks the House of this petition ?”

“ That will be seen when government speaks upon it. It is thought that the prohibition of foreign silks will be removed, and a moderate duty substituted. If so, it will be an important experiment.”

“ I rather think,” observed the other magistrate, “ that the fault will soon be found to be neither in the undue mildness of the law, nor in our way of administering it,—of both which the customs and excise officers are for ever complaining. I believe my friend here and I shall have little less reason to bless the change than these petitioning manufacturers.”

“ There will be enough left for me to do,” observed the Lieutenant, “ if, as I suppose, they will leave as they are the duties on articles not produced at home. Many a cargo of gin and tobacco will yet be landed in my day. Meanwhile, I must go and see the unpacking at the Custom-house. I hope I shall not be tempted to smuggle within those very walls, on my wife’s account.”

When the officer arrived at the Custom-house,

he found the Collector and Comptroller invested with all the dignity of active office, and the members of the Coast Guard who were there to claim their share of booty, watching with eagerness for the unpacking of a large store of that beloved weed which was wont to "cheer but not inebriate" them on their watch. A few inquisitive neighbours were peeping in from window and door, and Mr. Pim, admitted through favour, from his son being the Collector's clerk, paced up and down, his countenance exhibiting a strange alternation of mirth and vexation. He could not help enjoying the fun of people eluding, and baffling, and thwarting one another; such fun being one chief inducement to him to connect himself as he had done with contraband traders; but it was a serious vexation to see some of his property,—goods on whose safe arrival he had staked the earnings of his irksome school-hours,—thus about to fall into the hands of those who had paid no such dolorous price for them.

Somebody wondered that, as the smugglers had taken time to carry away so considerable a portion of their cargo, a large package of tobacco should have been left behind; tobacco being an exceedingly valuable article of contraband trade, from the difference between its original cost and its price when charged with the duty. If smugglers paid threepence a pound for their article, and sold it at half-a-crown, it must repay their risks better than most articles which they could import. One of the guard believed he had seen numerous packages of tobacco on the people's

shoulders, as they passed to the carts, and supposed that the quantity before them formed a very small portion of what had been landed.

"Most likely," observed the Collector. "There is more tobacco landed than there is of any thing else, except brandy and geneva. It is high time government was bestirring itself to put down the smuggling of tobacco. Do you know, sir," (to the Lieutenant,) "these fellows supply a fourth part of the tobacco that is consumed in England?"

"That is nothing to what they do in Ireland," observed Brady. "There were seventy vessels in one year landing tobacco between Waterford and Londonderry."

"Yes; the Irish are incorrigible," replied the Collector; "they smuggle three-fourths of the tobacco they use."

The Lieutenant doubted whether they were incorrigible. Neither the Irish, nor any body else, would think of smuggling unless they were tempted to it. If the duty, now three shillings per pound, were reduced to one shilling, smuggling tobacco would not answer; the sining three-fourths would get their tobacco honestly, and government would be the gainer. The same advantage would arise in England from the reduction of the duty; as, in addition to the practice of smuggling being superseded, the consumption of the article would materially increase, as is always the case on the reduction of a tax. With every augmentation of the duty from eight-pence per pound to three shillings, there had been a failure of consumption at the same time

with an increase of contraband trade ; so that the revenue had suffered doubly, and to an extent far beyond its gains from the heightening of the duty.

“ What have we got here ? ” cried Pim, as a gay-coloured article was drawn out from among the packages.

“ Flags ! Aye ; these were clever fellows, and knew their business, you see. Here are pretty imitations of navy flags, and a fine variety. British, Dutch, French ! They knew what they were about,—those fellows.”

“ So do you, it seems, Mr. Pim,” observed the Collector. “ You are as wonderfully learned in flags as if you had taken a few trips to sea yourself.”

“ I have lived on this coast for many a year, and seen most of the flags that wave on these seas,” replied Pim. “ But since these flags are but poor booty, it is a pity your men cannot catch those that hoisted them, and so get a share of the fine.”

“ Suppose you put them on the right scent, Mr. Pim. I fancy you could, if you chose.”

Mr. Pim disclaimed, with all the gravity which his son’s presence could impose. A parcel of bandanas next appeared, and as the familiar red spotted with white appeared, a smile went round the circle of those who anticipated a share of the seizure.

“ Ho, ho ! I suspect I know who these belong to,” observed the Collector. “ There is a gentleman now not far off on this coast who could tell

us all about them, I rather think. He has been sent for from London, under suspicion of certain tricks about the drawback on the exportation of silks. His shop is supplied very prettily by our smugglers, and his connexion with them is supposed to be the inducement to him to make large purchases at the India sales. I have no doubt he is one of those who buy bandanas at four shillings a piece, and sell them at eight shillings, when they have had a trip to Ostend or Guernsey. I have a good mind to send for him."

" This is the last sort of commodities I should think it can be pleasant to you Custom-house folks to declare forfeited," observed Pim. " Your consciences must twinge you a little here, I should think. I don't doubt your tobacco and your brandy being duty-paid, and all proper ; but when paying duty will not do, you will offend, just like those who are not government servants, rather than go without what you have a mind to. I'll lay any wager now——"

" Hold your impudent tongue, sir," cried the Collector.

Mr. Pim obeyed, taking leave to use his hands instead. He stepped behind the Collector, and quietly picked his pocket of a bandana : he did the same to the Comptroller ; and afterwards to all the rest, though the land-waiter whisked away his coat-tail, and the tide-waiter got into a corner. The only one who escaped was the clerk (Pim's own son), and he only because his having one round his neck made the process unnecessary. A goodly display of bandanas,—real Indian,—

now graced the counter, and everybody joined in Pim's hearty laugh.

"Now," said he, "if you summon Breme on the suspicion of this property being his——"

"So you know who the gentleman was that I was speaking of," cried the Collector. "Very well. Perhaps you can tell us a little news of this next package."

And forthwith was opened to view a beautiful assortment of figured silks, of various colours, but all of one pattern. Mr. Pim gravely shook his head over them.

"If you know nothing of those, I do," said Brady, taking out his tobacco-box, and producing therefrom the snip of silk which had been extracted from Elizabeth's glove. "'Tis the same article, you see; and the Lieutenant here declares 'tis English."

"And so it is, and so are these," declared the Collector. "The French would be ashamed of such a fabric as this, at the price marked, though they might own the figure; which must be imitated from theirs, I fancy. We had better send for Mr. Breme, and let the other Custom-house know of this seizure. I suspect it will throw some more light on the tricks about the drawback."

Mr. Breme was found to be nearer at hand than had been supposed. Having failed in his speculation, through two unfortunate seizures of contraband cargoes, he had cut but a poor figure at the larger Custom-house, where he had just been examined, and found it necessary to consult

with his Brighton brother as to the means of getting the threatened fine mitigated, or of paying it, if no mercy could be obtained. He was proceeding along the coast to Brighton, when Pim, who was aware of his movements, met him, and told him of the adventures which had taken place at Beachy Head.

What was to be done ? Should he slip past to Brighton quietly, at the risk of being brought back in a rather disagreeable way, or should he make his appearance at once, and brave the circumstances, before more evidence should be gathered against him from distant quarters ? The latter measure was decided upon ; and Breme, after changing his directions to the post-boy, leaned back in his chaise to ruminative, in anything but a merry mood, on the losses which he had sustained, was sustaining, and must expect still further to sustain.

Breme had lately become a merchant in a small way, as well as a shopkeeper. He had followed the example of many of his brethren in trade, in venturing upon a proceeding of some risk, in hopes that large profits would cover the loss of the occasional failures which he had to expect. He had employed his Spitalfields neighbour to manufacture a fabric in imitation of French silk, and had exported the produce as English, receiving at the Custom-house the drawback granted to such exportation. This drawback was the remission, or paying back, of the duties on the article to be exported ; such remission being necessary to enable the exporter

to sell his commodity in the foreign market on equal terms with the foreign manufacturers, who were less burdened with taxes. Breme claimed and received this drawback, he and his agents swearing, in due form, according to the statute, that the goods were really for sale abroad, and should not be relanded. The oath was considered merely as a necessary form ; and Breme had no notion of selling his goods in a foreign market at a lower price than would be given for them in England, under the supposition that they were French. Back they came, therefore ; and the government, which had paid the drawback, besides having thereby made a very pretty present to Mr. Breme, saw an addition made to the stock of the already overstocked market at home, while the weavers of silk were starving, and it was charitably contributing to frequent subscriptions for their relief. Mr. Breme was now, however, a loser in his turn, his beautiful goods being clutched by the strong hand of the law. In addition to this trouble, he was suffering under the prospect of a speedy end being put to this kind of speculation.

He could not decide what line of defence to take till he reached the Custom-house, and heard the nature and amount of the evidence that there might be against him. When he was told that the case was to be followed up very diligently, and exposed as a warning ; that the silks were known to be of the same kind as those for which he had had to answer in another place ; and that the manufacturer and weavers would be produced

to swear to the origin of the whole,—he offered to make oath that he had sold the goods abroad, and that their being afterwards smuggled back again was the act of his customers, and not his own. The Collector congratulated him that, this being the case, he was not subjected to the loss which some of his friends had regretted on his account. It was, indeed, a much pleasanter thing to have sold the goods and pocketed the money than to see such a beautiful lot of goods, prepared at so much cost, and with so much labour and ingenuity, now lying a forfeit to the offended British law. With a bitter sweet smile, Mr. Breme bowed in answer to this congratulation, and changed the subject. He observed that days of comparative leisure were apparently at hand for all the gentlemen he saw around him. If government should carry into other departments the changes it was about to make in the silk trade, there would be an end of many of the little affairs with which the time of the Custom-house officers was now so fully and disagreeably occupied.

What did he mean ? Did he bring any new information ?

Merely that government was about to remove the prohibition on the importation of foreign silks, and to substitute an *ad valorem* duty of 30 per cent.

“ Bless my soul, sir ! what an extraordinary thing ! ” cried the Collector. “ You do not mean that you are sure of the fact, sir ? ”

Mr. Breme had it from the best authority.

“ Why ‘extraordinary?’ ” asked the Lieutenant. “ The nature of our business this morning is proof enough that some change is necessary, is it not ? ”

“ To be sure,” replied Breme ; “ but the change should be all the other way. Do you know, sir, the market is deluged already with silk goods from the late slight mourning, and from a change of fashion since ? What are we to do, sir, when the French pour in a flood of their manufactures upon us ? ”

“ Our market is glutted because we can find no vent for our produce ; and I do not see how the master could be mended by increasing the inducements of smugglers to supply us, while our weavers are starving in the next street. If the French silks are, on the average, 25 per cent. cheaper than ours, a duty of 30 per cent. will leave our manufacturers a fair chance in the competition with foreigners, and will throw the trade of the smugglers into their hands. My only doubt is, whether the duty is not too high,—whether there is not still some scope left to smuggling enterprize.”

“ Your countrymen are much obliged to you, I am sure, sir,” said Breme, tartly. “ I think government should know that some of its servants are ill-disposed to their duty.”

The Lieutenant dared the shopkeeper to say this again, in the midst of the witnesses of what his conduct had been on the preceding night. Breme meant only,—and so forth.

Anxious and perplexed were all the faces now,

except the Lieutenant's own. His men had only a vague idea that something was to happen to take away their occupation, and to do a great mischief. Their officer bade them cheer up, and told them that it was only to the article of silk that the reported regulations would relate.

"There is no knowing that," sagely observed the Collector. "When they begin with such innovations, there is no telling where they will leave off. With such a fancy once in their heads, Ministers (though God forbid I should say any evil of them !) will not stop till they have ruined the revenue, and laid waste the country under the curse of an entirely free trade."

"I dare say they will be wise enough to retain duties which all classes allow to be just; and the levying of them will afford you quite sufficient occupation, Mr. Collector, if our trade increases, as it is likely to do under such a system," replied the Lieutenant. "This little custom-house may no longer be wanted as a store-place for contraband goods; but there will be all the more to do in the large ports; and there, sir, you may find an honourable and appropriate place."

Neither the Collector nor any of his coadjutors, however, could be consoled under the dire prospect of the total ruin of the revenue, which was the result they chose to anticipate from the measures understood to be now in contemplation. Their only ground of hope was, that the British manufacturers would rise in a body to remonstrate against the sacrifice of their interests. This, however, considering that the most emi-

nent of the body had already petitioned for the opening of the trade, offered a very slender promise of consolation.

Pim had early slipped away to spread the news of the contemplated "ruin of the coast." The tidings spread from mouth to mouth, till they filled every cottage, and reached even the recesses where the gipsies made a home. Draper and Faa came forth over the down to hear what the schoolmaster had to tell, and returned thoughtful to the tent where Mrs. Draper was looking out for them.

"Then the winters will pass over us in a ceiled house," said she, when she had heard the news. "We must join our tribe in London from the first autumn fog till the last spring frost."

"You and yours," said one of the men, who was weaving the rush bottom of an old chair. "We men may work in the free air, though there will be stones instead of turf under our feet. Many chairs to mend in London."

"But no night-play to fill the pocket and sharpen the spirits," old Faa observed. There was nothing in cities that he liked so well as his task of the last night,—to stand on the ridge as a watch upon the sentinel, and stoop, or hold himself erect, according as the sentinel turned his back or his face, that the lads in the furze might know when to creep forward on all-fours, and when to lie still. It was far pleasanter to see them all collected safe in the shadow of Shooter's Bottom, ready for work or fighting, whichever might befall, than to mix in the medley of bustling people in London streets, who were

too busy in the lamplight to heed the stars overhead, which, indeed, it took some time to make out through such an air.

Mrs. Draper would forgive the air for the sake of the warmth and shelter ; and the children would excuse everything for the sake of being seventy miles distant from Mr. Pim's school-room. The younger of the men hoped that the "ruin of the coast" might be delayed beyond another winter ; that if they might no more have the pleasure of handing bales of silk ashore during unlawful hours, tubs of spirits might yet cross the surf between sunset and sunrise.

"The 'ruin of the coast !'" cried Elizabeth, as the words struck her ear in passing some of the cottages. "Dear me ! has anything happened to the fish, I wonder." She soon found,—what she ought to have known before,—that fish are not always the chief concern of fishermen on the coasts of a land where trades are severally "protected." Let the fish swarm in the waters as the motes in the sunbeam, and the coast may be not the less ruined in the opinion of fishermen who grow sophisticated under a bad law.

The wives looked melancholy, as in duty bound, at the extraordinary cruelty of which the government was going to be guilty,—at the very irksome caprice by which it was endeavouring to prevent itself from being cheated, as heretofore, for the advantage of those who mocked, and occasionally murdered, its agents. The good wives thought it very strange of the government to interfere with their husbands. To set spies was bad enough ; but to take away their best

occupation was a thing not to be borne patiently. No wonder Ned kicked away his nets, and Jem cursed the child, and Dick left his boat, and said he should go to the parish, as his prime work at sea was taken from him. As for the children, they looked as much dismayed under the shadow of evil tidings as their mothers had done in childhood, on being told that Buonaparte and his French were coming ashore to cut all their throats. As soon as they dared speak, there was many a wail of "O mammy, mammy ! are they going to 'ruin the coast ?'"

Elizabeth thought she would make haste to the down, and tell her sister the dismal story. Breasting the wind as hardily as Matilda herself could have done, she arrived at length at the station-house, unable, for some time, to find breath for her tale. The signs of consternation below had attracted Matilda's notice ; and she, too, had dared the wind, to look for the cause through the telescope, which was her favourite companion when the Lieutenant was absent. Her smile at the news surprised Elizabeth, pleased as she was with her own prospects under the new arrangements.

" I should not have thought," she observed, " that you would care so much about the matter. It will be very pleasant, to be sure, to have as much French silk, without breaking the law, and being searched, and all that kind of thing, as we like to buy ; but really, if you were to see the distress of those poor people below ;—the children——"

" Ah, the children ! I am sorry for their fright ;

but they will soon be comforted. For their parents my pity is at an end. Yonder are their boats and tackle, and strong arms to use them; and there is the great and wide sea, where they may innocently get the bread by which they profess to live. This is better than stealing the bread from those who have no sea at hand from whence to fetch their food. I cannot pity those fishermen, Elizabeth: I cannot be sorry at this news. Remember, there are places full of a woe, compared with which the vexation of the people you pity is mirth;—chill chambers, where little ones have no heart to play, but crowd together to keep warmth in them;—alleys, where the wife, who is no longer wanted at her husband's loom, holds out her hand for the alms which her brave-souled husband has not the courage to ask;—hearts, where the mechanic sits with his arms by his side, looking into the empty grate, and thinking of stirring times gone by. When the wife comes in with this news, gathered from the street-talkers, he will leap up, look to his loom, and play with his shuttle as a child with a new toy. Hope will warm his heart from that moment,—hope will be in his face when he hurries out to hear if the news be true,—hope will be in his speech when he returns. These, multitudes of these sufferers, are they whom I have pitied; and for them, therefore, you must let me now be glad."

END OF THE FIRST PART.

W. Crows, Stamford-street.

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.

No. XVIII.

THE
LOOM AND THE LUGGER.
PART II.

A Tale.

By HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON:
CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1833.

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P R E F A C E.

Some of my correspondents will not be surprised at the notice I find myself compelled to give, that I shall henceforward take in no unpaid letters, directed in an unknown handwriting, which have not the name of the writer superscribed. The tax of postage for anonymous flattery or abuse is one to which I cannot be expected to submit.

As for the other tax,—on time,—thus imposed on myself and others, it may supersede some of it to declare, once for all, that no appeals to me, whether made in print or by letter, anonymous or avowed, have or shall have any effect upon me, unless they are addressed to my reason. If my arguments are open to refutation, I shall be thankful to have them refuted. If my views are founded on a false or narrow induction, the most acceptable as well as the truest kindness will be to show me where lies the error or deficiency. As an illustrator of truth, it behoves me to listen, with the utmost respect, to applications like these ; but, as a vowed servant of the people, I am not at liberty

to attend to appeals to my individual interests, whether presented in the form of evil prognostications, of friendly cautions, or of flattery, gross or refined.

What I have just said is applicable to only a few individuals, to some of whom I owe gratitude for kind intentions, and towards others of whom I feel more concern than resentment. To those to whom my work has been, in my own heart, dedicated from the beginning,—the people,—I have only to say that their generous appreciation of my object is so effective a support and stimulus, that nothing troubles me but a sense of the imperfection of my service; and that the most precious of my hopes is, that I may become capable of serving them with an ability which may bear some proportion to the respect with which I regard their interests.

H. M.

THE
LOOM AND THE LUGGER.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE COOPERS AT HOME.

A FINE spring shower was falling one May morning, in 1826, when Mrs. Cooper, the weaver's wife, was busily engaged in dusting her husband's loom, taking advantage of the interval between the finishing of the piece with which he was now gone to his employer, and the beginning of the new one which he expected to bring home. Many weavers are as averse to dusting and cleaning taking place in their peculiar department as the most slovenly bookworm. They appear to believe that a canopy of cobwebs sheds as important an influence on their work as the student expects from the midnight lamp. Old Short was one of these, and Mrs. Cooper, therefore, thought herself fortunate in his absence at the same time, and on the same errand with her husband. She might not only clean her husband's loom in peace, but have a touch at the old man's, in the hope that the removal of some

ells of cobweb, and an ample measure of dust, might escape his notice. Having opened the windows wide to admit the air freshened by the pattering shower, she sang to her baby,—still so called, though now nearly three years old,—encouraging, from time to time, the imperfect imitations of the child as he stood pulling buttercups to pieces at a chair, and cramming the remains through holes in its rush bottom. There were hopes that the child would, at some future day, be perfect in this song, for Short sang it from morning till night; and, when he was absent, Mrs. Cooper unconsciously took it up as often as she looked towards his end of the room. She was very tired of hearing it, too; but it was such a good exchange for the grumblings of former years, that she never found fault with the melody, and made up her mind to hear it hourly for the few years old Short might have to live.

But why had he left off grumbling? For a reason which does not prevail with all grumblers,—that he had nothing to complain of. For two years Mr. Culver had given him constant employment, and paid him well; and he heard so much on all sides of the great relief to the manufacturers from the reduction of the duties on raw silk,—a reduction permitted in order to prepare the manufacturers for a fair competition with the French when the prohibition of foreign silks should cease,—that he became less confident in his predictions that the trade would be found to be ruined; that the French would carry all before them; and that the last days of Spitalfields'

industry were approaching. He had so often emphatically taken his neighbours to witness that he was weaving his last piece, and been presently found weaving another, that he had now let the subject drop, and adopted the more cheerful saying, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This served his purpose very well, though he would have found it difficult, if questioned, to point out what evil he proposed thus philosophically to endure. In summer, to be sure, it was sometimes hot; and the days went on to grow dark early in winter; but the Coopers were kind to him, and able, through their own prosperity, to take good care of him. The child was readily admitted to be any thing but a plague; and with fifteen shillings a-week wherewith to answer his own small wants, the old man was not only abundantly supplied for the present, but had been able to accomplish one or two objects which he had long had at heart. His burial money was safely laid by; and he had bought a venerable Bible, which had been discovered by a neighbour lying on a book-stall, with his grandmother's birth entered on the fly-leaf. Short could not read; but he was uneasy as long as this Bible lay on the stall, liable to be tossed about without any pretence of consideration for his grandmother's name. Here it was now, deposited on the highest shelf of the cupboard, so that there was no fear of the child getting to it before he should be sixteen, unless on a Sunday morning, when it was regularly taken down to be dusted. As it was immediately replaced, however, being

far too valuable to be read out of, it was not likely to receive any harm at the hands of the baby. With all present needs amply supplied, and provision being made for his body and his Bible being disposed of as they ought to be, it was certainly much more reasonable that Short should sing than grumble.

“Look, look, Ichabod! See how the rain pours down! Look at the shining bright rain-drops, my pretty one!” said Mrs. Cooper, as she threw open another lattice, and cast a glance into the morsel of garden-ground behind.—“Cock-a-doodle-do! How the cock shakes off the wet. Come, my pet, come and see the cocks and hens in the shower; and the tulips! O, the fine tulips! How soon they will blow after this rain. Come, Ichabod, come, see the tulips!”

Instead of toddling across the room in answer to his mother’s call, as usual, the child set up a cry of terror, not without cause. In thrusting his green and yellow leaves into the holes of the rush-bottomed chair, he had pushed his hand through, and was a fast prisoner till his mother released him. When this was done, and it only remained to appease him, he was taken to the window to call for the gipsyman to come and mend the poor chair. Long did mother and child call, in mimickry of each other, and no gipsyman appeared; but instead of him, old Short and the two neighbours, who also wove in this room, all seeming very angry.

“Make haste in from the wet, Mr. Short,” cried the house-wife from the window “and bring

the neighbours in with you for shelter till the shower is over. 'Tis a fine pelting spring shower."

And Mrs. Cooper set down the child at a chair which had no holes, while she hastily put out of sight her duster and brush, that Short's evident ill-humour might not be increased by the appearance of any preparation for cleaning.

" You are welcome, neighbours," said she to one after another, as their heads emerged from the darkness of the winding staircase. " Plenty of room: room for twice as many, the looms being all empty at this time. 'Tis a curious chance that the looms should be all four quiet at once; but ——"

" It will be a more curious chance when they are all going again," observed Rogers, one of the neighbours.

" Aye, aye," replied old Short, " I, for one, have wove my last piece."

" Why, dear me, Mr. Short, have you got to saying that again? Only think how often you have said that, and, bless God! it has never come true."

" 'Tis true enough now, however," he replied. " There is hardly a master that will give out a cane to-day. There's nothing doing, nor never will be, while those cursed French are on the face of the earth."

" I thought you told me there was no more fear of them? I thought you were delighted at what the government ordered about the lengths of their pieces,—that none should come here of

the lengths that we knew they had woven ? I remember you rubbed your hands over that news till the child laughed again."

" Aye, that sounded all very well ; but government can't, or won't, prevent those goods coming, though they are prohibited. The French are as hard at work as ever, weaving silks of the new lengths, and the other goods are pouring in all along the coast, by means of the smugglers. There is more smuggled silk in the market now than ever was known before, and——"

" But it will soon be all sold and gone ; and besides, in two months the law will let them in, so as to allow people to buy them fairly ; and then there will be an end of the smuggling, they say."

" Never tell me ! By that time, the new goods that are now on their looms will be ready. No, no ; it will just be as it has always been with the Spitalfields weaver. Heaven and earth try together which can spite him most."

" Well, now, Mr. Short, I must think it is hardly right to say so. We have had our share of troubles, to be sure ; but every thing that could be done seems to me to have been thought of. You should remember how long we were especially favoured as to wages."

" And much good it did us ! Can you deny that at that very time all our best orders went to Paisley and Macclesfield, while we ought to have had our hands full, as not being such mushroom folks as they ? Can you deny, that people next took it into their heads to wear cottons, so that

in one winter four thousand looms stood idle? You may not remember the winter of seventy-three: 'twas before your time, I fancy; but there was the hand of God upon the people, if anywhere: poor starving creatures lying about on the door-sills, too weak to get home, when they had been out for the chance of an alms. But even that was nothing to the distress of fifteen and sixteen, which I suppose you do not pretend to forget."

"Forget it! no," replied Mrs. Cooper, with a mournful shake of the head. "That was the year my poor father died; and mother and I thought he might have lived longer (though he had worn himself out at his loom) if we could have nourished him better, and let him hear the cheerful sound of the loom. Then it was that he advised me to set to work and qualify myself for a service, instead of remaining a weaver; he repenting, as he said, that he had brought me up to an occupation that wears the spirits by its changes as much as the body by its toils. No; I do not forget that winter; but I should be sorry to say any thing about spiting the Spitalfields weavers, for I am sure every thing was done for us that charity could do."

"Well, but I don't like charity, for my part; it is not the same thing as earning, and being beholden to no man."

"Why, that's true; but you have been beholden to no man of late. You have earned to your heart's content for a long time past, without interruption from God or man, Mr. Short."

“ Not without spite from man, mistress. Do you forget my being forbidden to keep pigeons these last eighteen months ? There was nothing in the world I cared about like my pigeons : and now, since these many new houses, with wonderful good windows, have been built, I must send away my birds, lest they should break a pane.”

“ You should forgive that, in consideration of your neighbours having more air and light. You very houses, new and with sashed windows, should show you that times are improved, Mr. Short.”

“ Lake, the builder, will hardly tell you that they are,” observed Dickens, the weaver. “ You should have seen him just now, holding forth to us about how we have all been deceived. When every thing looked so bright two years ago, he began to build, thinking there could never be houses enough for all the weavers that would be wanted ; and now, Culver gives out scarcely a cane, and where is Lake to get his rents ?”

“ Has not my husband got a cane ?” asked Mrs. Cooper, with a faltering voice.

“ Not he, I warrant,” replied Short ; “ and neither Dickens nor I want our looms ; so there is six shillings a week, besides work, struck off from you at once. And now, mistress, I suppose you will leave off being thankful for nothing, as you are so ready to be.”

Mrs. Cooper made no other answer than taking up little Ichabod, who was holding up his forefinger, and saying “ hark !” to a noise in the street. When it came nearer, he did not like it,

and his under lip began to project, and his innocent chin to wrinkle for a cry. His mother chattered to him to send away his fears, though she did not like what she heard any better than he."

Tramp, tramp, came many feet, and the buzz of voices rose and sank. Some hundreds must have passed, before every casement in the house was opened for the inmates to peep out. A sudden gleam of sun which came out diverted the child's attention; and when he stretched out his hand, with an impatient cry, to snatch the raindrops that trembled and glistened from the eaves, every man of the crowd below looked up as he passed. They might any where have been known for weavers by the projecting eyes and narrow shoulders which distinguish the tribe, and yet more by the shuffling step with which they slopped through the pools, with feet whose accustomed motion was on the treadles of the loom. The pallid gloom which sat on their faces was a less peculiar characteristic; it belongs equally to the sinewy miner, the stout ploughman, and the withered operative, when want is at their heels, and they believe, rightly or wrongly, that it is the word of tyrants which has set it on to dog them.

" Holla, there! where are you marching?" cried Dickens from the window. " Where is Cooper?" he inquired, perceiving that Mrs. Cooper's glance was wandering over the crowd, and that she had checked herself when about to ask for him, fearing, no doubt, that he might not

like to be called out from among his companions by a woman's voice. Every man looked round him, and no Cooper came out.

"He is not there, my mistress," said Dickens, seizing his hat, and clattering down the narrow stairs to join the mob. "I must just go and see what is doing; and you will get news from your husband before I come back, I'll be bound."

There seemed to be a halt at the end of the street, and Short and Mrs. Cooper, who were now left to their mutual conjectures, emulated each other in leaning out of the window, to see what was to happen next.

"Dad, dad, dad," said young Ichabod presently, kissing the palm of his hand, as was his wont when his father came in sight from abroad.

"Why, there's my husband! and I never saw him all this time," cried Mrs. Cooper, hastening to go down to him as he stood with folded arms, leaning against the door-post below.—All he could tell was that he feared some mischief would happen. There had been discontent for some little time; the worst hands being turned off one week, and more and more by degrees, till now, when many of the best had been sent home without the expected employment. There was great anger against the masters, and, above all, against the Frenchman. Cooper fancied they were about to call him to account, from the stand the crowd seemed to be making near his house.

"But, John, what are we to do?"

"Why, we must get on without that six shil-

lings a-week, till our neighbours have work again. I must work a little harder, that is all."

To her surprise and delight, Mrs. Cooper now perceived that her husband had lodged just within the door the cane that she had been assured had been denied him. He, - happier than his neighbours in being a better workman, had employment ; and his wife could spare a good-natured smile at Short's propensity to make the worst of everything, and also some sympathy for the Frenchman.—She should be sorry if any harm came to him, far away as the young ladies, his sisters, were from their friends. It was a pity they came, to be sure, interfering with Englishmen's proper business ; but they seemed to conduct themselves very well——

" Except in the point of his picking out the best weavers, and getting them from the other manufacturers," observed Cooper. " He would fain have had me ; but I told Mr. Culver he might depend upon me, as I have too much spirit to leave an English master for a foreign one."

" Besides that, you would hardly know what to make of his new sorts of looms and patterns. They would not come easy to your hand."

" For that matter," replied Cooper, " I am not above learning anything new, even from a Frenchman ; and I have some curiosity to find out how they manage a certain thing that I have been trying after these two years. I shall try and try again, for I don't want to come out at last a worse weaver than Cook."

" You a worse weaver than Cook !" exclaimed

the wife. "I should like to see the day when that will happen, John Cooper."

Cooper smiled and reminded his wife how much easier it is to improve one's craft when put in the way by a knowing person, than when one has to find it out for one's self. Nevertheless, as Culver had been a good master to him, he would continue to work for him, if the Frenchman offered him the weight of his first piece in gold.

"This much," continued Cooper, "I am willing to do for Culver: but as to anything more, I am for letting a man have fair play, be he French or be he English. I would not persecute any man for choosing to settle in one place rather than another, whatever I might think about its being better for him to remain in his own country."

"Do you think Culver encourages the people against the Frenchman?"

"Not one of the masters likes him; and indeed he does steal their trade very fast."

"Aye, just at present; but his secrets will soon get abroad; and others will manufacture as well as he; and then they ought to thank him for teaching them."

"May be they will then: but they don't now. Not that Culver would lift his hand and say, 'Burn down that man's house;' but he would ather not hear him praised as his own weavers praise him."

"They praise everything about him but his odd speech. What a misfortune 'tis that he cannot speak English as we do!"

M. Gaubion, the gentleman in question, daily thought so too. He could make his way, as to language, very well with educated persons ; but the dialect of his weavers puzzled him perpetually. His foreman acted as interpreter ; but in his absence, M. Gaubion, who at Lyons had been thought to be very accomplished in the English language, found that he could not understand one word in ten that was said to him. The case was made worse by his being a timid man, and fully alive to all the peculiarities of his situation, without being able to make light of them as some of the gayer tempered of his countrymen would have done.

On the present occasion, M. Gaubion was taken by surprise ; and unintelligible as the yells of an English mob were likely to be to him at any time, there was no chance of his understanding them amidst the conflict of feelings under which he now listened to them. The word " Macclesfield " alone struck his ear as familiar, and he comprehended from it that the people disapproved of the proceedings of his firm in that place, where he believed he had been doing what must be acceptable in employing some hundreds of people in throwing and manufacturing silk. He knew that building had been going on, through the stimulus given by his demand for labour, and that which had arisen in other quarters, partly through rivalship of himself, partly from an uncontrolled spirit of speculation, and, yet more, because the silk trade was really, on the whole, in an improving condition. He wanted to ex-

plain to the crowd that one thousand new houses had been demanded by advertisement in Macclesfield, the year before, and that from four to five thousand apprentices had been wanted about the same time ; and that if, after this tremendous state of activity, manufacturers found their business slack for a time, it was hard to lay the blame on him 'of what had resulted from their own extravagant speculations. It was wronging him to suppose that his concern, however flourishing, could swallow up all others, or that he had any more to do with the temporary distress at Macclesfield or in Spitalfields than at Coventry, where there were thousands out of employment at this very time.—M. Gaubion could find no words, however, at the critical moment ; and if he had, they could scarcely have been heard while the builder, who could not get his rents, was haranguing, and the disappointed weavers were shouting, and the envious manufacturers on the outskirts of the mob were grumbling about the favour shown to Frenchmen by an unpatriotic government. There was nothing to be done but to throw down among the crowd the newspaper containing the advertisements about houses and apprentices, and to trust to the sense of the people to discover what it was that they were to make out from the proceeding.

The constables now arrived and inspired him with more confidence in their staves than he had in the good sense of the people. Stragglers fell off from the main body in all directions, till nobody chose to stay to be marked as disposed for

a riot. They left the foreigner wondering in himself.

“ What is it that these people would have ? I employ hundreds of them, and they complain. I teach them my superior art, and they are jealous. If I were to employ but twenty where I employ a hundred, they would complain yet more. If we Frenchmen kept the secrets of our manufacture, these English would nourish a still stronger jealousy. What is it that they would have ? ”

This was just the question which Mrs. Cooper had ready for her husband to answer, when he returned, newspaper in hand, from M. Gaubion’s house.

“ They want a steady, uniform demand,” was his reply ; “ which neither M. Gaubion, nor any one else, can ensure them, unless they could give them masters with cool and sound heads, and find some broom that would sweep away the mischiefs that remain from old bad plans. How is M. Gaubion, or any one else, to prevent the slackness which comes of building a thousand new houses to hold five thousand new apprentices in one town ? — of which you may read in this paper. And if we are so jealous of the French goods as by law to declare all of a wrong length which are made ready to be sold here as soon as they are allowed to be brought in, how is Gaubion, or any one else, to prevent the smuggling of those goods ? What we want is a little prudence on the part of the government and the masters, and a little patience on that of the men.”

“Aye, patience!” cried Short. “Patience enough wanted to hear you talk! Here you have been preaching prudence and patience these ten years; and all for what? Can anything make the silk trade prosper?”

“It has prospered, for two years past, only rather too vehemently,” replied Cooper. “If the masters had let it grow a little more gradually, all would have been right: and all will be right yet, if we have but a little patience, as I said before.”

“You have no reason for saying that, in the face of all experience.”

“I have reason;—and that from experience. The demand for thrown silk is greater than ever it was; and if that is not a good sign, I don’t know what is. Nearly twice as much thrown silk is imported now as there was when the trade was most protected; and our throwsters at home find a demand for a million of pounds more than was needed two years ago. Now what is this silk all wanted for but to be woven? and, depend upon it, Mr. Short, you will have your share.”

“Aye, when, I wonder? You talk as if I were a young man, instead of an old fellow who can’t wait for his bread till new-fashioned schemes are tried, and the old ones found to be best. When, I say?”

“When we make trial of fair play between nation and nation; which will be after next July.”

“And here is May now,” observed Mrs. Cooper. “If no more silk is to be smuggled

after July, Mr. Short, you will soon be at your loom again. I wish I could think that the French gentleman would be comfortable after that time ; but I fear the feeling against him is too strong to go down so soon."

" That is the worst of such feelings ever being allowed to grow up," replied her husband. " However we may talk about being on free, and fair, and friendly terms of competition with the French after July, I doubt whether we shall be willing to make the experiment really a fair one, as if we belonged all to one country."

" Why, John," said his wife, " even you would not work for the foreigner so soon as for your old employer. You were saying so this very morning."

John muttered something about its being a different thing countenancing Frenchmen in their proper country and in one's own neighbourhood ; but he could not give a very satisfactory account of what he meant. He ended by hoping that there would be room in the world of production for everybody ; and that all would find out where it was easiest to get what all wanted, that each, whether English, French, or Chinese, might be employed to furnish what he could provide most easily and cheaply, and all help one another. If this were done, all might perhaps be well furnished with necessaries and comforts ; and, if not, their privations would not be made more bitter by the jealousies which God's children now nourished against one another.

Short was sure the only way to have peace and quiet was to go on in the old way.

“ What shall we make of you, my boy ? ” cried Cooper, catching up the child for a romp, before beginning the arduous task of putting his new piece into the loom. “ What shall we make of you, child ? Will you be a little weaver ? ”

The boy immediately began stamping with his tiny foot, and reaching out his hand for the shuttle.

“ Why, look ! ” cried his delighted mother. “ He is pretending to weave already. Aye ; that is the way, my boy. Tread, tread ! That is the way. Will Ichabod be a weaver, like father ? ”

“ In steadier times than his father lived in, I hope,” said Cooper. “ Hey, boy ? Will you weave like a Frenchman, Ichabod, so that your loom may be as busy as a Frenchman’s ? ”

“ And carry an English heart in your breast, dear, all the time ? ” added old Short.

“ Without hating the foreigners,” observed Mrs. Cooper. “ We must teach him, John, that there is room in the wide world for all.”

CHAPTER II.

MATTERS OF TASTE.

THOUGH M. Gaubion was himself too shy to be very eager about the society of his neighbours, he had no wish to place any restraint upon the inclination of his household for intercourse, not only with the families to whom they had brought special introductions, but with those whose near residence tempted to an acquaintance. Mr. Culver and he merely exchanged bows and slight greetings when they passed ; but that was no reason why Mr. Culver's daughters, who met his little sister Adèle at children's parties, should not be her companions at other times ; nor why Mademoiselle Gaubion, the elder sister, and his housekeeper, should not indulge her hospitable disposition, and make as many friends as she could.

It was a great mortification to this lady to see her brother looked coldly upon by those who ought, she believed, to be capable of appreciating his manifold merits : but she conceived that this coldness would only be increased by her becoming reserved also ; and that the best justice and kindness to him was to endeavour to interest those whom he could not exert himself to propitiate. She made herself popular for his sake, and earnestly hoped in time to see her own popularity merge in his. Mr. Culver already pronounced her a very amiable and accomplished young person, and declared himself happy in

allowing Charlotte and Lucy to visit Adèle, though nurse was somewhat lofty in her way of talking about the freedom which the foreigners were so ready to use with her young ladies.— The time had been when a sentence from nurse would have settled the matter any way she chose ; but the girls were growing up now to an age when it was proper to consult them about their undertakings and pleasures ; and nurse had never been what she once was since the loss of her son. She was more prejudiced and more peevish than ever, and had, therefore, lost much of her authority over her master as well as her charges. As she did not choose herself to lift the knocker of a Frenchman's door, there was nothing for it but to order Susan to go with the girls instead.

Before Charlotte and Lucy had been long seated, they were observed to be exchanging looks and whispering about something which stood on a table at one end of the room.

“ My flowers ! You envy me my flowers,” said Mademoiselle Gaubion. “ Smell them then. Are they not sweet as they are full blown ? ”

Not all the politeness which Charlotte could muster enabled her to say that the smell was very sweet. Instead of white-thorn, mignonette, and carnation, the perfume was rather that of musk. She caught Mademoiselle Gaubion's hand in the midst of its flourishes to and from her nostrils, and obtained a close view of the bouquet. It was artificial.—Lucy agreed with her that neither had ever before seen such artificial flowers ; and it was long before they were tired of placing them in

various lights, and trying how easy it would be to deceive nurse and their youngest sister as they had themselves been deceived. Harriet Breme would hardly wear her lily of the valley any more if she could see these. She might look through her father's stock many times before she would find any so fresh looking,—so very natural.

In a little while, Mademoiselle Gaubion observed, such flowers as these might be had in every shop in London where such goods were sold. In July—

“ O, that is when French silks may be had, papa says. But these flowers cannot be made of silk.”

Mademoiselle Gaubion explained that the cocoons of silk-worms were used for these flowers, and showed how they were painted and embroidered into the semblance of real flowers. She offered to teach Charlotte how to make them, if it was thought worth while. Charlotte thought it would be well worth while, as all flowers except such coarse-daubed bunches as she did not like to wear, cost a great deal of money.

Adèle also had yet to learn. She had had plenty of flowers for her doll's robe and turban at Lyons; but she had bought them, as they cost next to nothing there.

“ Ah,” said Lucy, “ we were wondering how some French things can be made so cheap. Nurse has a beautiful box that her son got somehow from France, and it cost only a shilling. He told her so, for fear she should think he had done an extravagant thing. There is a glass at

the bottom ; and the sides are of pink paper, beautifully plaited ; and there is an enamelled picture of the Virgin and St. Somebody ; and round the picture, the prettiest wreath of flowers ; —tiny roses and forget-me-not, and yellow buds and green leaves between. It is a large box,—as large as my hand ; and it cost only a shilling. The flowers alone would cost two, papa says, if we ordered such to be made here."

" We would show you that box," said Charlotte, " but that we do not like to ask nurse now for anything that her poor son gave her. She can think of nothing but him all the day after, if we do."

" Poor nurse ! has her son left her ?" asked Mademoiselle Gaubion.

" O, he died,—and so shockingly ! It is more than two years ago now ; but nurse is as grieved as ever when anything puts her in mind of it. It was so dreadful for the first few days,—before it was known exactly what had become of him ! Nurse would not believe he was dead ; and she was always saying that the smugglers had carried him out to sea, and sold him for a sailor, like somebody she once heard 'about. She was sure he would come back one day, either a rich India merchant, or begging at the door,—or somehow. And then, when the next letter came——"

" Did it tell ? Was he dead ?"

" O yes. Papa would not let us tell Maria, for fear of its making her afraid to go to bed ; and I believe he did not mean us elder ones to know ; but nurse set us to ask my brother Robert ;

for she never believed that papa had told her everything. Do you know, when they had shot him dead, they put his body into a cavern in the cliff, on the top of a flight of steps, and sitting up so that he looked as if he was alive, the first moment they found him."

"But O, what do you think put it into their heads to look for him there?" interrupted Lucy. "They saw two cliff-ravens fly out when somebody went near the cavern; and then they knew that there must be a body there."

Lucy stopped short at a sign from her sister, who thought the rest of the story too horrible to be told. Since Adèle could not make out by any mode of cross-questioning, what these further particulars were, she wanted next to know what caused Nicholas to be murdered. Her sister explained to her, with so much feeling, the nature of the service on which he had been engaged, and showed so much concern at his fate, that Lucy said, half to herself, and looking wistfully at Mademoiselle Gaubion,

"I shall tell nurse how sorry you are."

"Tell her, if it can comfort her to have the sympathy of a stranger."

"A stranger,—a foreigner," repeated Lucy, still half to herself.

"I said a stranger, not a foreigner," replied Mademoiselle, smiling. "As long as it is a stranger who sympathizes, what matters it whether she be native or foreign?"

"Nurse thinks," replied Charlotte, "that French people are not sorry when any harm

comes to those who try to prevent their smuggling. She was saying this morning——”

Another sign from Charlotte.

“ Tell me what she said,” replied Mademoiselle, smiling in a way which emboldened Lucy to proceed.

“ She said she did not want to have anybody in the neighbourhood that had helped to murder her son; and that every French person had helped to murder him, because it was the trying to get in French goods that made all the mischief.”

“ Nurse does not know, perhaps, that the French suffer no less than the English in this kind of struggle. Frenchmen are sometimes thrown overboard into the sea, or shot on the shore. Frenchmen run the risk of losing their goods; and in such a contention, I am afraid it sometimes happens that a Frenchman hates an Englishman.”

“ What! for smuggling each others’ goods? If they want each others’ goods, why do not they buy and sell them at once, without loss and fighting and cheating and murder?”

“ Are you French really sorry about smuggling?” asked Lucy. “ Because, if you are——”

“ You may see in a moment that my brother is sorry. Why else should he leave his country, and come to live here? He comes to make silk here which may be sold without cheating and fighting.”

“ And if papa went to Lyons, would the people there be glad or sorry to see him?”

“ If he went to make silks, they would not be

either particularly glad or sorry, because the people at Lyons make silks better than your papa, or any other Englishman, knows how to make them yet. But if your papa went to make cotton goods, or knives and scissors, or if he set up iron works, they would be very glad to have him ; for all these things are made by the English better than by the French."

" Then you would get artificial flowers so cheap that you need not make them yourselves," added Adèle : " and you would have silk frocks, like the Bremes ; for the prettiest silk frocks cost twelve or fourteen shillings less there than here."

Charlotte thought she should like to go to Lyons ; it would be such a saving of money ; and she thought the Lyons people must like coming to London, if they could get things made of iron, and steel, and cotton, cheaper than in France. Adèle proposed that there should be a general change ; that all the Lyons people should come to London, and as many Londoners go to Lyons. As it was plain, however, that this would leave matters just where they were at first, as the French could not bring their silk-worms from the south with them, nor the English carry their iron mines on their backs, the simple expedient occurred to the young ladies of the inhabitants sending their produce freely to one another, instead of wandering from home to produce it.

" If the French would send me my silk," observed Charlotte, " I might save my fourteen shillings here just as well as at Lyons ; and if I had to pay a little for the bringing, some Lyons

girl would pay papa for the sending of the cotton gowns she would buy of him. What a capital bargain it would be for us both ! Do not you think so, Mademoiselle ?”

“ I do ; but there are many who do not. When some of our French rulers wished that our people should save their money by buying your cottons where they could be had cheapest, our people were frightened. They sent and told the king that France was ready to bathe his throne with her tears in agony at the idea of buying English goods so easily : and now, you know, some of you English are just as much alarmed at being allowed to get silks cheaper than you can make them.”

“ But it is so very silly !” exclaimed Charlotte. “ Such people might as well prefer paying five shillings for a bad bouquet to paying half-a-crown for a pretty one, like that. I do not see why they should give away money to bad flower-makers at that rate.”

“ Especially when the bad flower-makers might get more money still by doing something which they could do much better. Yet this is just the way that Buonaparte made his people waste their money, some time ago. He would not let them have sugar and coffee from the places where they could be had best and cheapest, but would try to produce them at home. He made people press out the juice of carrots and beet-root, and whatever tasted sweet, as the sugar cane will not grow in France ; and, with a world of trouble, they made a little sugar ; but it was far too dear for

many people to buy. They tried to make tea of many kinds of herbs, and coffee of bitter and burnt roots ; while, all this time, there was plenty of tea in China, and sugar and coffee in the West Indies."

" I would have left off all those things, if I might not have had them properly," said Charlotte.

Lucy thought it would be very hard to be so stinted by any man's caprice and jealousy ; and she saw that the saving would be only in one way, after all. The French might save the money they were bidden to spend on dear sugar and bad tea, but they would still lose the opportunity of selling the goods of their own manufacture which the Chinese and the West Indians would have taken in return for their tea and sugar. It was very odd of Buonaparte not to see that his plan caused a loss in every way.—Mademoiselle thought that he did see this ; but that he did not mind the loss to his own people, provided he made the English suffer. She had nothing to say for the good-nature of this ; but who thought of good-nature when kings go to war, with the express purpose of ruining one another as fast as possible, while they each boast that God is on their side ? She remembered that her father admired Buonaparte as much as anybody could ; but even her father could not thank him for making many of the necessaries and comforts of life so dear as to prevent his getting on in the world. She remembered the day when the news came that foreign trading was to go on again. Her father

found himself able then to make her brother Marc a farmer. Marc had long wished to be a farmer; but his father had not had the power to do anything for him while much of his money was swallowed up in the consumption of things which were only to be had dear and bad as long as the ports were shut.

“ I suppose,” said Charlotte, “ that must have been the case with many people besides your father. Everybody that kept house must have saved as soon as the ports were opened. I wonder what they did with their savings!”

“ Madame Mairon began to dress her daughters in the prettiest English muslins that ever were seen. All Lyons began to admire those girls, though some complained that they spent their money on foreign goods. But I am sure they laid out a great deal on native ribbons and lace at the same time, which they could not have afforded if tea and sugar had been as high as ever. Then there were the Carillons. They set up a hundred more looms directly; and every body called them proud and speculative; but the looms are still busy, I fancy.”

“ Ah, that is the worst of it,” observed Charlotte. “ While their looms are going, ours are standing still.”

“ Not *because* theirs are going. Witness my brother’s. The Carillons made silks for many countries, but not for England; for they have never smuggled, I believe. When your father’s weavers see the goods the Carillons will send over, after next July, they may learn to weave as

well ; and then your father may sell as many ; for there will be more people to wear silks every year, in proportion as more countries send us goods, and want some in return. There is plenty of room in the world for your father, and my brother, and the Carillons."

" I wish," said Adèle, " you would show Lucy the shells M. Carillon gave you."

" What sort of shells ?" Lucy asked : and for an answer she was shown into a room at the rear of the house, which was unlike any room she had ever seen before. One side of it was occupied by cases of stuffed birds, some from all the four quarters of the world. There were other curiosities in great abundance, less captivating to young eyes than gold-dropped African partridges, and burnished American humming-birds ; but the shells transcended the most brilliant of the winged creatures. Speckled, streaked, polished, they were held before the eye. Fluted, indented, ribbed in waving lines, they were examined by the touch. Murmuring, they were held to the delighted ear. There was no end of admiring the pearly hues of some, the delicate whiteness of others, and the fantastic forms of those which lay in the centre of the cabinet.

" So M. Carillon gave you these shells !"

" Some of them. Those in the compartment that Lucy is looking at. M. Carillon's sons have not quite all the world to themselves to trade in ; though they do sell their father's goods on many shores. When your brothers grow up to be

merchants, and sell your father's silks in many countries, they will bring you shells as beautiful as these, if you ask them."

" I should like a parrot better," said Lucy.

" I should like some plums and chocolate, like those that Pierre had sent him from South America," observed Adèle.

" Well, anything you please," replied Mademoiselle. " Only let the nations be in good humour with one another, and we may all have what we like. I know I should never have possessed this pretty museum if Jean Carillon had not been trading to India, and fallen in with these shells ; and there is not a museum in Paris that will not be improved, year by year, as our ships go into new countries, and bring fresh curiosities for us to study and admire."

" But I suppose these shells cost a great deal ; and the birds, too ?"

" They do at present, because it is a sort of new taste, and very little pains have been taken to gratify it. But there are shells enough in the deep and wide Indian seas to furnish the cabinets of the world ; and there are birds enough in the western forests and gardens to show every child in our close cities what beautiful creatures God has made to flutter in his hottest sunshine. The taste will be sure to spread, as it is for the good of everybody that it should spread. Many natives of foreign countries who now lie dozing on the burning shores, trying to forget their hunger and not to regard the heats, will dive into the green sea for the beautiful things that are

hidden there. They will be up and busy when they see European ships on the horizon, and sing as they sit polishing and preparing the curiosities which are to bring them bread for their children, and raise a roof over their own heads."

"But we must pay for these curiosities," objected Lucy. "We must pay very high; and I think that is not fair, when birds can be had for the catching, and shells by being just taken out of the sea."

"When those days come, my dear, we shall pay what will be a high price to those natives, but a low one to us. People in their country will begin to wish for our curiosities, as we wish for theirs. A savage gave this noble shell, as large as my hand, and more finely veined than any marble in the world, for six nails; and when that savage's children grow a little more civilized than we are now, they will give another such shell for a square inch of your Derbyshire lead ore, or half-a-dozen dried English plants. Then the drying of plants here, and the diving for shells there, will be a business which will support a family; and both countries will be wiser and happier than they were before, by having obtained something new to study and admire."

"I think," said Adèle, "that people will not know, till that time, all that they might and should know of what God has made for them."

"They will certainly not know all the happiness that God has made for them, till they share as equally as possible what He has given to each; whether it be that which belongs to sea, air or

earth, or the produce of man's skill. Whatever any country produces best, that let it exchange for what other countries produce best. Thus will all be best served, and in the best humour with each other."

" If you might choose what you would have from the finest country in the world, what should it be ?" asked Lucy of Mademoiselle.

" I should like a great number of things to make our museum more complete. Here are only a few stray treasures."

" But M. Carillon is going to send you something very strange and very valuable," observed Adèle. " Something from Egypt, is not it ?"

" Yes ; and I shall be very glad of whatever he may send me ; but he cannot give me what I should like best."

" I know what you mean. You want some plants. Well, perhaps this may be a dried lotus, or the flowering reed of the Nile. His son has been in Egypt ; and how do you know that he may not be sending you plants ?"

" I should like them alive," replied Mademoiselle. " The potato was brought alive, and it grew and flourished ; and I should like to try whether some of the American shrubs could not be made to grow here. There are some of the Madeira mountain plants which I would rather have than wine and oranges."

" But what would you do with them ? There is no room here for such a garden as we had by the river-side at Lyons ; and even in a conservatory the plants would get smoked."

"Why, that is true," replied Mademoiselle, sighing. "We must be content with our little museum."

"Are you very fond of plants?" enquired Charlotte. "Then I will take you to two or three of papa's weavers——"

She stopped short, and bit her lip, and Lucy frowned at her. Mademoiselle asked with a smile,

"What of the weavers? Will they show me flowers?"

Charlotte answered constrainedly that the operatives of Spitalfields were very fond of their little gardens, and succeeded in raising beautiful tulips and auriculas.

"O, let us go! It cannot be far, and it is a very fine evening," said the eager little lady, looking up to the yellow sunshine which streamed in from between two opposite chimneys. Charlotte and Lucy glanced at each other, and neither offered to move.

"Why, my children, is it possible?" cried Mademoiselle, putting a hand on the shoulder of each, and looking them full in the face with a smile. "You are afraid, I see, to introduce me to your father's weavers. You are afraid to tell nurse that you have done so, because poor nurse is jealous of the French gentleman, and his little French sister. Is it not so?"

The girls seemed about to cry. Mademoiselle went on,

"You shall request your father to introduce me to a florist or two. Meantime, we will ask

my brother whether there are such among those whom he employs. My girls, we are of one country now,—you and I. Why should there be any tormenting, unworthy jealousy? Tell me why."

Charlotte only knew that some people thought,—some people feared,—it seemed so very natural that manufacturers should get the best weavers from one another.

" So very natural!" exclaimed Mademoiselle. " I tell you, my girl, that my brother has it not in his nature to feel jealousy of a neighbour; and I tell you also that my brother will in time give good weavers to your father and to all of the same occupation in this neighbourhood. If the suspicion you speak of were natural, it would be for my brother to feel it; yet, I will take you among his men without fear, if we find that they have tulips and auriculas."

Before Charlotte had quite ventured to look again in Mademoiselle's face, M. Gaubion came in, and gave her the address of several of his men who were as fond of flowers as herself. When she gaily asked him if he was afraid of the Miss Culvers being admitted to intercourse with persons who were working for him, he smiled and added the address of a woman who was weaving velvet of a particularly curious pattern, which he thought the young ladies might like to see. This woman might have auriculas too, for aught M. Gaubion knew; and the party set out to ascertain the point.

Mrs. Ellis was found at her loom, and over-

heard to be scolding lustily till her visitors popped their heads through the gap by which the stairs opened into the room. Her natural tone of voice was not immediately recoverable, and she spoke in something between a whine and a scream, which suited ill with the languid air with which she hung her head aside, and fumbled with the gilt locket which hung by a worn hair-chain round her neck. She had so much the appearance of an actress of the lowest grade, that Mademoiselle thought there could be no mistake in conjecturing that she had not always pursued her present occupation, nor offence in asking how the confinement suited her health. She had sat at the loom, she said, since she was the age of that boy,—pointing to a lad who had evidently been the object of her wrath. Not that she had had work all that time. O, no ! She had suffered her share from want of work. Indeed, it was hard to tell which was worst for the health ;—the load on the spirits of having no work, or the fatigue of weaving. If the ladies would believe her, it was a killing occupation. It sat very hard upon her stomach, and her heart turned half round ; and her lungs,—O, if they knew what lungs she had !

“ You let us know that before we came up to see you,” observed Mademoiselle. “ If you think your lungs weak, is it not a pity that you should exert them as you did just now ? And, this minute, you spoke much louder than we need trouble you to do.”

“ Ah ! ma’am, ‘tis the way with my voice,

When it once gets up, I can't, somehow, get it down again."

The boy at the loom confirmed this by a side-long look of great meaning. His mother sighed so as to show a fine remaining capacity of lung, and was about to proceed about her infirm head, and a weak ankle that she had had all her life, when her visitors turned the current of her complaints upon the times. Poor wages! very poor wages! and hard work. It was a bad sort of employment.

"Why, then, do you bring up your children to it? Here are five looms in this room."

"Yes, ma'am; but only three for my own family. My eldest girl is a filler. Those two farther looms are let to neighbours."

"And both with work in them, I see. This seems a pretty piece of black silk that your boy is about; and he seems to be doing his work well."

"Pretty well, ma'am: pretty well, for the time. I thank the Almighty, Tom is a middling boy."

The little lad had all the appearance of being better than a middling boy. He worked with might and main while the ladies stood by, shouting the shortest possible answers to their questions, amidst the noise of his machine. His mother gave him a smart rap on the head, and asked him where his manners were, to go on with his weaving while the ladies spoke to him. His looks conveyed his apprehension that he should have been equally found fault with if he

had quitted his grasp of his shuttle without leave. He now related that he was twelve years old, had learned to weave three weeks, and had in that time woven sixteen yards, for which he was to have sixpence a-yard. The ladies thought that, in relation to him, his mother's voice ought to be made to come down again, to whatever pitch it might have risen.

“ And whose work is this ? ” asked Charlotte, examining a piece of slight French-white silk, carelessly covered with a brown-looking cloth.

“ That’s Peggy’s,” replied Tom. “ She has left it for to-night, to make the beds.”

The girls had observed, as they mounted the stairs, that though there was a green baize on the floor of the room below, a handsome mahogany chest of drawers, a tea-tray with a tiger upon it, and above it two fine pictures,—viz., the Duke of Wellington staring mightily upon his companion, a Madonna, as if meditating war against her child—though all these things testified to the means of comfort being in the house, there existed the deplorable discomfort of unmade beds late in the evening. A curl-papered girl, with a face grimed with dust from her loom, was lazily undrawing the curtains, and about to let in the fresh air for the first time that day. Mademoiselle did not know much about how far money went in this country ; but she consulted with Charlotte as to whether the times ought to be called very bad by a family who earned respectively, three, five, ten, and twenty shillings a-week, besides letting two looms at three shil-

lings per week each. Charlotte thought they must be so well off that it would be worth while to spare the second girl from her loom, and give her time to take her hair out of the paper with which it bristled, to make the beds in the cool air of the morning, to new paper the staircase, where tatters hung to gather the dust, revealing the most snug mouse-holes possible ; to brush the green baize, - polish the tiger, and dust the Duke of Wellington ; and, finally, to purify the atmosphere of the weaving-room, by certain appliances which seemed at present not to be dreamed of. But Mrs. Ellis appeared to think that it would be time enough to clean when days of adversity should come.

She resumed her curious velvet weaving, that the young ladies might observe the action of the machinery ; in the course of which investigation Adèle was sensible of a descent of dust into her mouth as she looked up, and Lucy's cheek was tickled by a floating cobweb. Seeing the one make a grimace, and the other rub her cheek indignantly, Charlotte asked Mrs. Ellis how often she whitewashed. The lady with the locket smiled at the simplicity of such a question, addressed to a weaver ; and when asked whether dust did not injure her work, she reached out her hand for a brush which lay near, gave one stroke with a skilful flourish, and looked with a triumphant face through the cloud she had just raised, as if to say, " You see ! " Part of the gesture was, however, lost upon her visitors ; for Mademoiselle had run to the window on the first hint of what

was going to happen ; Charlotte was coughing ; and Lucy and Adèle had their hands before their faces.

Mademoiselle returned, after awhile, to suggest a modest doubt whether it was not better to be without dust, than to brush it from one place that it might fall upon another—into Mrs. Ellis's weak lungs, among other receptacles ; but Mrs. Ellis seemed to agree with old Short, that a loom would be nothing without cobwebs ; and all that remained, therefore, was to ask about the auriculas.

Tom brightened up at the word. The poor lad had none to show at home ; for his mother had no idea of sparing him time enough to make any use of the small patch of soil behind the house, which presented a fine study of cabbage-stalks and broken crockery to any painter who might happen to be passing by the back lane. But Cooper lived at hand ; and Cooper happened to like auriculas, and to think Tom something more than "a middling boy ;" and he encouraged him to come at spare minutes, and watch the progress of his friend's gardening ; and, moreover, allowed him a corner in which to set a root or two of his own. At the first sign of permission from his mother, Tom now pulled down his wristbands, flung on his coat, and stood, cap in hand, to show the ladies the way.

It was not till the Miss Culvers drew one another's attention to old Short, as his grizzled head was seen from the garden to be moving in his loom, that it occurred to Mademoiselle that

she might be trespassing on the premises of their father's weavers, after all. Next popped up at the window the round face of Ichabod, kissing the palm of his hand as he saw his father, though Charlotte flattered herself that this act of courtesy was intended in answer to her nod.

"O dear!" said Mademoiselle, "we are in a forbidden place. Come, Charlotte, come and hear that I am not begging to know any secrets about weaving, but only about flowers: and, Lucy, do you keep beside Adèle; and if she asks any questions that nurse would not like, tell me."

Cooper laughed, and said that he was the one to learn, instead of communicating secrets to French manufacturers; and Miss Charlotte need not fear his leaving her father's service, as he had told his wife, but a little time ago, that Mr. Culver had been a good master to him, and he was determined to work for him still, if all the foreigners in the world came to settle near. He explained that he meant no incivility by this, offering the choice of some fine roots to Mademoiselle, giving her advice as to the cultivation of them, and inviting her to come whenever she liked to consult him on this matter of mutual taste.

"How is it," asked Mademoiselle, smiling, "that you will treat a foreigner, as to flowers, as if she was an Englishwoman? Do you forget that I am French, that you thus offer me the choice of your tulips?"

Cooper replied that God had made flowers to

grow in all parts of the world as a common possession ; and that for people to be jealous of one another's methods of cultivation was a meanness that he, for one, would be ashamed of. He knew that a neighbour of his had wrung off the head of a pigeon of a rare kind, that he might be master of the only pair of that kind in existence ; but this was, in his opinion, making sport of God's works, and encouraging bad feelings towards men, in a way which was irreligious, if anything was. If he saw a party of his neighbours' children in the fields, one taking possession of all the violets, and another of all the primroses, and a third of all the buttercups, and preventing those to whom only daisies were left from having any benefit of what God's hand had scattered for all, he should get his bible, and show them plenty of sayings in it which should make them ashamed of themselves.

“ And why not so, likewise, with that which is produced by man ? ” inquired the lady. “ Are not the faculties of man roots from which proceed designs ; and are not the fruits of those designs as clearly given for common use in the end as the blossoms which are scattered over the fields and meadows ? Let him that gathers call them his ; but let him be free to impart when he meets with another who also desires to impart,—free from the interference of authority—free from the envious remarks of those who look on ; and if one has more skill than another, let them learn of one another.”

"To be sure, madam: just as I am willing to show you my method with my tulips."

"And as my brother is willing to improve your silk manufacture. But you will not learn what he has to teach, because he is a foreigner."

Cooper was willing enough to learn as much as he could find out by examining what was wrought in the Frenchman's loom; but working for him, when English masters were to be had, was altogether a different thing.

One would think, Mademoiselle observed, that God had made the flowers of the field, and that man had made himself, by the distinction thus set up between those possessions which were allowed to be given for the good of all, and those which were proposed to be kept for selfish purposes. Clothing of silk was as much furnished by Providence as the raiment of the field-lilies; and to forbid the transference of the one or the other is to oppress both those who would transfer and those who would receive: it was to condemn violet-gatherers to have nothing but violets, and primrose-lovers to grow tired of primroses; while they would have been made perfectly happy by the mixed garland, whose materials were all within their reach.

Cooper observed that his little Ichabod had grown tired of buttercups lately, and had got the habit of throwing them out of the window. It was sometimes difficult to amuse so young a child, who had no companions at home. He often thought of taking him to the infant school,

where the little ones had sham gardens, which it was pretty to look at.

"Let your child carry his lap full of buttercups," replied Mademoiselle, "and he will exchange them readily for things which he will not throw out of the window; and from this infant traffic we will go and take a lesson in mutual confidence and mutual help."

CHAPTER III.

CHANCE CUSTOMERS.

NURSE Nicholas had met with so much sympathy and kindness from everybody about her since the day when her misfortune was made known to her, that she excited, at length, something like envy in the inferior servants of Mr. Culver's family. They had, at first, offered to make up her mourning for her, and to take the entire charge of the children for a few days, that she might have leisure to grieve alone; and they were making slops, or mixing brandy-and-water for her all day long for the first week,—thinking indulgence a very consoling thing, whether earned by illness of body or pain of mind. Moreover, they had patience with her pettishness for a longer time than could have been expected, observing to one another that it was certainly a very cutting thing to have an only son shot; and that it was

enough to make any temper go astray to think of anybody that had done his best for his country being served in such a way. In time, however, when four years had elapsed, they began to feel that the call upon their good-nature and forbearance was more protracted and incessant than was necessary. Nurse had really grown so proud, that it was difficult to keep well with her; and they were tired of seeing the very same look come over her face, and of hearing the very same sigh, whenever there was mention of things which must be mentioned sometimes,—people's sons, for instance, and the sea, and tobacco, and such things. If there was any sort of dispute, in which their master or the young ladies interfered, everybody was sure to be blamed except nurse; and profit came out of her misfortune in other ways, too. They wished they might ever get into such favour with any master or mistress as to have friends to tea as often as nurse had; and all to cry over the story of poor Nicholas, though, to be sure, time was found to talk about plenty of other things before the evening was over. Then, though Nicholas had been a very good son, in respect of sending presents to his mother, out of his pay, the gifts she now had would much more than make up for anything she had lost from that quarter. They could not conceive, for their parts, what she could do with her wages; they only wished they were to expect what she must have to leave. She really could not spend anything, except for the trifles she gave the children on their birthdays. As sure as the year came

round, her master presented her with a black gown ; and the young ladies bought muslin handkerchiefs and mourning-caps, more than she could use ; and Mademoiselle had knitted her a pair of black mits for Sundays, that were quite a curiosity for the knitting. O yes ; it was very well to wear mourning from year to year,—longer than she had done for her husband. Nurse would always wear mourning now, as well she might, though they doubted whether she would have had much more comfort of her son, if he had lived, than now ; for he could not have been spared often from his duty, and he was always but a poor hand at writing a letter. If a woman was to lose an only son, it could hardly happen in an easier way than it had happened to nurse.

In the midst of some such speculations as these, it happened that nurse accepted a little black shawl from one of the young ladies with unaccountable indifference. There was nothing for it but to suppose that she was now so accustomed to presents that she thought little of them. But on the next Sunday the matter was differently explained. Nurse appeared in a splendid figured brocade, which had been left her by an aunt, and never altered in the fashion, from there being no materials wherewith to make up any part of it afresh. By dint of a double quantity of muslin handkerchief, and of a long and wide muslin apron, tamboured by herself when at school, the peculiarities of the waist were in part hidden, while enough projected on all sides to show what fine, stout fabrics our fathers could weave. The

apparition of nurse, thus attired, appeared on the stairs time enough to allow of all the necessary speculation being gone through before church.

"Papa, papa!" cried Lucy, flying about the house to find her father, who was reading his Sunday paper quietly in the back parlour. "Oh, papa!"

"Well, my dear. But I wish you would not slam the door."

"I thought nurse was behind, and I did not want her to come in. Oh, papa! have you seen nurse?"

"No, my dear. Is her nose growing out of the window, and over hill and dale, like the wonderful nose in the German story that Maria was telling me?"

"No, no! but she does look so odd in that gay gown that she used to show us for a sight; and just after Charlotte gave her a shawl, too,—a shawl with a border of pretty grey and white pattern, on a black ground. She might have worn Charlotte's shawl a little first."

"She will wear it still, I dare say; and perhaps she thinks she has been in black long enough."

Nurse now came in, with a prim and somewhat sentimental expression of countenance, as if thinking that she ought to change her face with her dress, and scarcely knowing how to set about it. Her master's question soon brought back one of her accustomed modes of looking and speaking.

" You are going out for the day, I suppose, nurse ? "

" Going out, sir ! where should I go to ? It is for those who have friends and relations to go out visiting ; and I have none, except just the Taylors and the Aytons, and old Mr. Martin, and Sukey Street, and a few more. You seem to think I must be always wanting to go out visiting, sir."

" Not at all, nurse. It was only that I saw you were dressed, and I supposed——"

" Dressed ! aye, it is time to be dressed when the very nursery-maids make as fine a show as their mistresses did twenty years ago. Why, there is Mrs. Mudge's nurse-maid ; I curtsied to her last week, knowing the baby, and taking the girl for Mrs. Mudge-herself, as I well might do, for she had a prettier Leghorn than ever her mistress wore, and a slate-coloured silk, with leg of mutton sleeves. You may rely upon it, sir, with leg of mutton sleeves, and a band the same, buckled behind, like a young lady."

" And so you put on something gayer than a slate-coloured silk to outdo her."

" It puts one upon one's dignity, sir, to see such ways in bits of girls sprung up but yesterday. At this girl's age I worked hard enough, I remember, for months together, before I got a chintz, which was thought a great thing in my day."

" And I dare say somebody scolded you for getting it ; for chintzes cost as much then as

some silks do now. I dare say somebody scolded you, nurse."

" Why, my mistress made me wear black mittens and a white apron with it, to show that I was a servant: which was very proper, though I had no mind to it at the time. But as to wearing silk, except on a pincushion, I assure you, sir, I never thought of such a thing."

" Any more than Mrs. Mudge's maid now thinks of dressing in white satin. I dare say not, indeed; for it was as much as any but rich mistresses could do to get silk dresses in your young days."

Nurse hoped her master was not going to object to her wearing silk now, on Sundays and the young ladies' dancing days. When servant-girls took upon them to wear such things as their elders never aspired to, it was time——

" I am not going to object to your wearing silk, nurse, any more than to the nurse-maid you speak of doing the same. The more you both wear, the better for me."

" Aye, in the sense of your being a manufacturer; but, as the master of a family, sir, you would judge differently."

" Not at all. If there are silk-worms enough in the world to yield silk wherewith to dress every man, woman and child, where is the harm of every man, woman, and child wearing silk, if it pleases them to do so?"

" But the look of it, sir! Think of a girl dressing like her mistress!"

" It is an unfit thing when the girl has not money enough properly to afford such a dress. But if the price falls to a point within her reach, there is no more reason why she should not possess herself of such an one than there would be if she had had money left her wherewith to buy it. Her mistress will forthwith array herself in some more expensive fabric, which, perhaps, none below duchesses had worn till it became cheaper in proportion, as silk had done; and this fabric will, in its turn, descend within the reach of servants, till Mrs. Mudge's maid may, in her old age, be as much surprised at the array of the young girls of that time as you now are at people of her rank wearing silk."

" But, papa," objected Lucy, " what are the ladies to do all this time? Must duchesses go on inventing expensive things to wear, or else dress like their maids?"

" There will be always plenty of people able and willing to save the duchesses the trouble of inventing," replied her papa. " We have not yet seen half of what human ingenuity may do in the way of inventing comforts and discovering beauties. If you could pop into the world again a few hundred years hence, you might chance to find every African between the tropics dressed in clear muslin, and every Laplander comfortably muffled in superfine scarlet or blue cloth."

" And what would our duchesses wear then, papa?"

" Something which we cannot guess at; and

which to them would appear more beautiful and convenient than was ever invented before."

Nurse wondered what her master could be thinking of. Instead of having people humble and contented with their condition, he would have them be looking up and on continually.

"Have you seen the gipsy ~~women~~ lately?" inquired her master. Not very lately, nurse replied; but she probably should soon, as a great annual gipsy feast was to be held within the month, somewhere near town; and no doubt the Drapers would return to their old haunts for the occasion.

"Do you bid them be contented with their condition, living in tents, on the damp ground, and eating animals that they find dead?"

Nurse thought her master more odd than ever. As if all respectable people did not like to live under a roof, and have decent clothes, and eat like Christians! She did not know that in old times, servants and labourers who dwelled somewhat in gipsy style were desired to be content with their condition; and that it was thought a piece of ineffable presumption to wish to live in abodes at which beggars would now shrug their shoulders. Mr. Culver would have people content without what could not be had otherwise than by the sacrifice of what is of more consequence than that which they wish for. He was sorry to see maid-servants dressed in lace, because it is impossible for maid-servants to buy

lace without neglecting their parents and friends, or omitting to provide themselves with a hundred more necessary things, or with a fund for their own support when they must cease to earn ; but if lace should ever come to be as cheap as tape, he should like to see every body wear lace that likes it.

" O, papa ! " cried Lucy, " would you like to see little Ichabod Cooper with lace on his shirt-collars ? "

" I should like to see the Coopers, and not only the Coopers, but the poorest of the poor, in possession of every thing that is useful and that gives pleasure. If there was enough for every body of all that is useful and beautiful, why should not every body have it ? All would be the happier, would not they ? "

" But there never could be enough of every thing for every body, papa."

" How do you know that, my dear ? I am far from being sure of that myself."

Lucy stared, and began to think of all that she liked best ;—blue sashes, and cages of squirrels, and ice-creams, and *Rosamond*—*Rosamond* that she hid under her pillow that she might read it before nurse was awake in the morning. Was it possible that there could ever be enough of all these for every body in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America ? Her papa assured her that the experiment had never yet been tried how many of God's good gifts can be put within the reach of God's creatures. So many have been afraid of

others possessing too much, that all have only got a very little way in helping one another, though they have been very clever at the work of mutual hindrance. It may be that there are pearls enough in southern oceans to deck the whole human race; and cotton enough on the American plains to clothe the species; and dyes enough in the eastern woods to diversify all the habitations in the world; and industry, and zeal, and good-will enough in men's hearts to dispose them all to learn and to communicate whatever the wise have to teach, and the benevolent to suggest, and the inventive to relate, from the remotest corners of the earth. It may be that every good book will in time be read in all countries of the globe, and then——

“ And then,” interrupted Lucy, “ some Lapland children may read about Rosamond’s gallop down the Black Lane; and some little people in China may be pleased at finding that she was fond of gold and silver fish. Well, this does not seem very surprising when one thinks how many people in America and in the East Indies know all about Rosamond already.”

“ I should like to be now sending my silks as far as our good books will travel in time,” observed Mr. Culver.

“ And so you will, I suppose, papa, if so many people will wear silks as you seemed to think just now.”

“ Your brothers may, after me; or their sons and grandsons, after them,” replied Mr. Culver;

"but it takes a long time for people to learn to exchange freely and fairly against each other, when they have been taught to be mutually jealous, and to fancy that if one party gains by the exchange, the other must be a loser."

"But many more do buy silk than some time ago, papa."

"Yes, indeed," observed nurse; "when maid-servants begin, it is a pretty good sign that silk is growing common."

"Then you will grow rich, papa. I should like you to grow rich."

Her father told her that a beginning was made by his having ceased to grow poor. When smuggling should have ceased, and there should have been time for the English manufacture to improve as the French had done, he hoped he might be more in the way of growing rich than he had ever yet been. Meanwhile, the more people wore silks, be they servant-maids or the dames of New Zealand, the better for him; and for them, if they felt more complacent in silk attire than in the woollen petticoats and mantles of matting which their respective ancestors wore.

"The Bremes dance beautifully in their blue Gros-de-Naples frocks," Lucy observed.

"Better than you in your white, my dear! Well, if all the world is to wear more silk, it is time you and your sisters were beginning,—I suppose you think. Hey, Lucy?"

Nurse was in possession of the young ladies ideas on this subject, and took the present op-

portunity of putting her master in possession of them likewise, together with her own.

" Well, nurse, I have no wish that my children should go on being envious of the Bremes a moment longer than is necessary. So, silk frocks they shall have. I shall send you in half a piece from the warehouse, which will do very well. If you find a few blemishes in the warp, you can cut them out in the making, I dare say; and, but for them, the fabric is perfectly good."

The girls were a little disappointed at not having the choice of a colour, and alarmed at the mention of blemishes; but it was a great thing to have gained, in any way, a point which had long been aspired to. Nurse was much vexed that she could not have the pleasure of making the purchase at Mr. Breme's shop, giving Mr. Breme himself, if he should be behind the counter, all possible trouble in suiting the tastes of her young ladies. In order not to be wholly deprived of this satisfaction, she determined that all the adjuncts of these pretty new dresses should be purchased there. This settled, she and her charge were equally anxious not to delay the business beyond the next day.

When they arrived near the shop, on the Monday morning, nurse still resplendent in her figured brocade, they were mortified at finding the house shut in by a scaffolding, and the narrow entrance between the planks almost closed up by heaps of shavings and piles of bricks. They slackened their pace to observe, and were silently afraid that it must be too dark within for

the proper transaction of business. While pausing, they were saluted by a cloud of dust which rose after some heavy blows behind the screen of planks, and which did much towards convincing them that the present was hardly the time or place for discharging their errand.

"We must come some other time," remarked Lucy to the unwilling nurse.

"We must go somewhere else," observed Charlotte, who saw little hope of the scaffolding being down before the next dancing-day, beyond which it was impossible to wait for the new silk frocks.

The workmen went on knocking, sawing, and standing in the way very unconcernedly; but a strange-looking personage peeped out from behind the corner of the screen of planks, saying,

"Go somewhere else, ladies? Where will you meet with such a shop as this, now being enlarged for your convenience? You will find it light and busy enough within. I know of one good customer, at least, that is there."

The girls thought this odd, as the man was only a poor person who was mending a chair-bottom, in the corner formed by the projection of the scaffolding into the street, where he could lay his rushes beside him, and work undisturbed by the passengers, while in full view of them. He seemed to take upon himself the office of advertiser of Mr. Breme's concern, as he directed to the establishment the attention of all who stopped and peeped over the heads of the little boys who were watching his proceedings.

He let everybody know that the shop was accessible, and was now being enlarged. Several persons lingered to see whether nurse and her charge went in; and their safe and easy entrance, when they once made the attempt, encouraged one or two to follow.

Charlotte looked round for the good customer spoken of by the chair-mender, but could see no finely-dressed lady engrossing the attention of the shop-people; no dainty gentleman pronouncing upon such articles as he might be presumed to understand. There was only an old woman buying nun's lace for her mob-cap; and a young woman, with a baby in her arms, comparing remnants of common print; and a child waiting patiently, with a hot half-penny squeezed in her hand, for a skein of thread; and a party of gipsies in red cloaks at the further end of the shop, with their backs turned to the new comers. Nurse was too busy putting on her spectacles, and holding gauze ribbons in various lights, to take any notice of what other people were doing, till the man who was serving her leaned over the counter to whisper that the customers yonder (nodding towards the gipsies) were choosing a very expensive dress for their queen to wear at the next of their festivals; and that it was to be made up by one of the first dress-makers in town. A stout country girl, who had followed nurse and her party, and taken her seat beside them, heard this as well as they; and from that moment her attention seemed bent upon the wearers of the red cloaks rather than upon her

own purchases. She stepped forward a pace or two, when one of them turned at an accidental noise, and an immediate recognition took place, to the surprise and amusement of the shop-people.

The gipsy strode forward, holding out her brown hand, and saying,

"Why, Miss Rebecca, I thought the sea-shore was our meeting-place. So often as I have met you there, I never dreamed of seeing you in town parts."

"Nor I neither, Mrs. Draper: but I am not long from home."

"Only come for a little pleasure, Miss Rebecca. Well; you know I used to tell you that there was one that would give you what pleasure you liked, if you chose to ask. I dare say now—"

And Mrs. Draper looked round, as if for some supposed companion of Rebecca's; but Rebecca answered,

"Now, I told you, Mrs. Draper, long ago, to talk no nonsense; and I'm here buying things, you see—"

"Ay, my dear; I see," said Mrs. Draper, looking no graver for being told that she talked nonsense. "I see; but how's the father?"

"Why, but middling. Father's a wonderful hearty man for his years, to be sure, considering some things."

"Ah! the ruin of the coast, which must have hurt his feelings. And dame,—how's the dame?"

"O, she's well, and hobbling about, as usual.

And I hope she'll keep well. Dame and me are going to keep school—a boarding-school for girls."

Mrs. Draper laughed heartily at the idea of Rebecca teaching manners, as she said, and walking out behind her young ladies, two and two.

"Ah! you may laugh," answered Rebecca, good-humouredly; "and I know many people think I'm not a bit fit for it; but I don't care what pains I take—I don't care what I do, if I could but see father smile."

Mrs. Draper was struck dumb; for to her it seemed that Mr. Pim not smiling was not Mr. Pim at all. What could have happened to render it difficult for Rebecca to "make father smile?"

"It is not a venture, as it would be to set up a school in a town, to set one up in the country," observed Rebecca. "'Tis such a common thing, you know, to send children to the sea-side when they are delicate; and dame always took great care of our chilblains; and, for my part, I like nursing them when they are ill better than teaching,—ever so much. And, you know, I *can* teach sewing. I think much of needle-work; it is so useful! They shall do a deal of that.—And then we have the maps. I can teach them those; and they shan't stick to them too long. I remember, when I used to learn, how my back ached, and I used to get the fidgets, and think, 'Well, now, shall we ever leave off?' O, they shall go out and come in again; and we'll find them something to read that they will get

amused with ; and if anything more is wanting, why, father will help us, perhaps."

" He will help you all to run races on the downs. He is the one to say ' One, two, three, and away.' But I really hoped, Miss Rebecca, that you were buying for a house of your own."

" And where would be the use of a house of my own, unless father was to be in it ? and then it would be all one as his. No, the old house must do,—at least for a beginning. If better times should come, perhaps——"

" What ! your father's school fell off, then. It was a fine one when my children went ; but I suppose the ruin of the coast ruined it ?"

" 'Tis all ruin to us. If it was only the loss of the trade to himself, that was a great amusement. But it set the people all complaining about not affording schooling for the children; for they had grown careless about the fishing. And then, several went away for a time, after the murder, for fear of the reward the government offered ; and that broke up everything. Father never got over that.—You may talk about running races on the down. Father has never been to the down with any heart since ; for it was there that he spoke with poor Nicholas the very day before——"

Rebecca stopped short, struck by the effect of what she was saying on the gay ancient personage who sat near. Nurse came forward, jerking an end of ribbon in one trembling hand, and fumbling for her handkerchief with the other, while her countenance resumed the expression of which

her fellow-servants were tired, and which they hoped she had laid aside with her mourning.

" My son, ma'am ! I beg pardon for interrupting you, ma'am, but he was my son. Nicholas, I heard you mention. If you knew him, perhaps you would tell me anything you might know."

Rebecca and the gipsy looked at each other, which made nurse appeal to Mrs. Draper, with confessions that she should not have turned her away from the back-door so peremptorily, the last time she came to tell the maids' fortunes, if she had thought she knew anything about the Preventive Service and her poor son.

" We knew him very well indeed," said the plain-spoken Rebecca. " He used to pass almost before our door twenty times in a day, when he was upon watch ; and our children used——"

" Ah, poor fellow ! he was always like a child himself. He could never say a cross word to a child," sobbed nurse.

" Nor to anybody else," feelingly observed Rebecca.

Charlotte saw that the scene was becoming such as little beseems a busy shop, and she thought of an expedient for gratifying nurse without exposing her feelings to observation. After a consultation with Lucy, she asked Rebecca if she could come to tea at their house, and tell nurse everything that she could recollect about Nicholas. This Rebecca promised to do, though her stay in London was to be very short. She had come only to " improve herself " for a week

or two, and to provide a few necessary additional articles for her school-keeping ; and her father began to want her at home.

While nurse was wiping her eyes, in preparation for finishing her shopping, Mrs. Draper called upon Rebecca for an opinion respecting the purchase the gipsies were about to make. Lucy followed, being unable to restrain her curiosity ; and impatiently did she beckon for her sister to join her when she saw with how splendid an array the counter was spread. Rebecca looked no less delighted.

“ Yes, that will be the one,” observed Mrs. Draper, seeing that Rebecca’s eye rested on a fabric of peculiar richness and beauty. “ O, yes, it is expensive ; but it is worth the money ; and these cheaper silks have grown so common ! Half the girls we tell fortunes to have more or less silk about them. Our queen must not be taken for such as live by a yearly wage. She must have of the best, and this must be the one.”

“ O no, sir,” Rebecca replied, drawing back from the gentleman behind the counter, when he pressed some of his goods upon her notice, “ O, no, thank you, sir ; they are all too dear for me to buy to wear down by the sea-side.”

“ Yet you and these ladies have seen very pretty silks down by the sea-side,” observed Mr. Breme, for it was he who was himself serving his best customers for the hour. “ We all know that very pretty silks have been seen by the sea-side ; but that day is over.”

“ I don’t know that, indeed,” replied Rebecca,

"They say that Brighton will be fuller than ever next season, and that is the place for pretty dresses. I suppose there are not many such beauties as this sold anywhere?"

"More than you would suppose, ma'am; particularly of late. There is no end now to the silks that may be lawfully had; and when that is the case, more people think of wearing."

"And yet silks are very little cheaper than they were."

"At present, not much, as you say, ma'am. But people are so pleased to think that they may wear what has been forbidden so long, that they make a very brisk trade, I am happy to say. This will lead to improvement and cheapness, and then people at home and abroad will wear more still. The more you can get of a thing, the more will be wanted. That is the rule, ma'am; from small beer to satin dresses. The more can be had of a thing, the more will be wanted. Could not you fancy one of these beautiful things, ma'am?"

"Very easily," replied Rebecca, "if a fairy would come this moment and give me money to buy one, but not else. I am keeping yonder gentleman waiting with the brown holland, which is what I wanted. I must leave your silk dresses in your shop till I have earned one."

On further consideration, Rebecca feared she could not spare a whole evening to nurse. She had so much to do, and her time was so short! Would a call do? or meeting them in their walk? A better plan than either struck Charlotte.

Would not Rebecca meet them at the dancing-school on Wednesday? One who was about to keep school should see some dancing; and she and nurse might have their chat in a corner, without anybody knowing what they were talking about. This was certainly the best plan, and Rebecca agreed to it, with grand expectations of the sight she was to see.

CHAPTER IV.

GRIEF AND DANCING.

REBECCA was so anxious about her appointment, that she arrived at the dancing-school some time before the party she expected to meet. A family of pretty little children were just sashed and sandalled, and made ready to enter the great room, when she arrived; and she drew back, with her usual modesty, to allow them and their governess to pass. Their dancing-school curtsey filled her with admiration; and she pulled up her head, and began bending her knees in involuntary imitation, when she remembered that she had better not try anything so new before so many spectators as were assembled in the room. She went up to the dancing-master, in her usual stumping pace, and apologized for not making such a curtsey on her entrance as those young ladies, as she had not been used to it. Mr. Brown condescended to give her a grin and a nod; and, when he saw her

stand as if not knowing where to turn next, did her the further favour of pointing with his fiddle-bow to a seat which she might be permitted to occupy.

There she sat, absorbed in what she saw, till nurse arrived with Miss Charlotte and Miss Lucy in their new frocks, new shoes, new gloves, and all things newer, if not handsomer, than the Miss Bremes'.

"They are not here yet," whispered the one sister to the other.

"No, not yet: but I hope they will be sure to come. Why, look! there is Adèle, and her sister with her! Nurse, we will go and sit beside Adèle, and then you and Miss Pim can have your talk comfortably by yourselves. I am sure the Jenkinsons will make room for us on their bench."

The Jenkinsons made room, and it was immediately discovered that Adèle came to learn to dance; upon hearing which, Lucy fell into a reverie which lasted till a twang of the fiddle called her up for her first quadrille.

Rebecca could not help breaking off her answers to nurse's questions to wonder at Lucy's dancing, and admire the height of her jumps, which, however, did not seem to please Mr. Brown quite so well.

"Gently, gently, Miss Lucy," said he. "There may be too much activity, ma'am, as well as too little. We are not at a leaping-match, ma'am."

Lucy blushed and smiled, and still went on,

sometimes nearly losing her balance, and having already lost any grace she might have been accustomed to display. She threw out her feet, sometimes heel foremost, stuck her elbows in her sides to give herself more concentrated power for a jump, and over-reached her mark in crossing, till she nearly pulled her partner down. Mr. Brown declared, at last, that he must send for a neighbouring builder to ascertain whether the room was strong enough to bear Miss Lucy's dancing.

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Rebecca, "why should not they let her dance as merrily as she likes? I will never stint my scholars in their jumps."

Nurse thought that on the sea-shore, or on the green, it was different from the present occasion. Miss Lucy came to learn to dance, not to practise leaping. She could not imagine what possessed the child to-day to dance as she did. Lucy was not strong, and there was trouble enough sometimes in getting her to do more than merely shuffle her feet.

"She just makes up when she is in spirits for what she can't do at other times," was Rebecca's good-natured excuse, as she smiled at the happy-looking fluttered Lucy.

Nurse beckoned the offender across the room to receive a rebuke, as soon as the quadrille was finished; and Lucy came smiling, panting, and fanning herself, and went away again, not at all disheartened by nurse's lecture on manners. She was observed, as she took her seat, to look up

at Mademoiselle and Adèle, as much as to say, "What do you think of my dancing?" Mademoiselle smiled, and Adèle looked indifferent.

"Well, ma'am," said nurse, "so the Lieutenant's lady was very sorry for my poor son. I remember he said something of her once in a letter or a message."

"Said something of her! Why, well he might. He seemed to think of little but pleasing or displeasing her; and she was kind to him accordingly. I used to think he would never put his hat on again, when he had taken it off to be spoken to by the ladies from the station-house."

"Aye, there is another lady too. Was she kind to my poor son also?"

"All very well: but Miss Storey had always more partiality for our people than for the Preventive men. Poor father said,—one of the last jokes I have heard him make,—that he saw nothing for it but Miss Elizabeth taking to drinking or smoking, as she is so partial to smuggling and all that sort of thing, and as she must now get what she used to have so in other ways."

"But gloves come over against the law still; do not they?"

"Very few, high as the duty is. They are not sought after as they were a while ago, for they say the English gloves are nearly as good and as cheap now, and there are many more made. They say at the Custom-house that near twice as many skins come into the country as there were a few years ago; and so there is no occasion to smuggle so many French."

“ So Miss Storey does not go down to the poor people’s cottages as she used to do, my son told me, stealing out of sight of the guard ?”

“ Not she. She walks quite disconsolate along the beach to the east, instead of going in and out, above and below, among the downs, as she used to do when she had something to go out for.”

“ And the Lieutenant’s lady too ; does she go out as formerly ?”

“ As much as ever ; but then she has something to do that makes it worth while. She gets one of the Preventive people to carry a little light table and her portfolio ; and she paints,—never minding the wind or the sun, or anything. If it blows much, she pins her paper down at the corners, and puts her hair back, and paints away : and if the sun is hot, up goes her large umbrella, and still she paints away.”

“ Dear me ! What does she paint ? I wonder whether she ever painted my poor son.”

“ I think she hardly began after her marriage till the spring weather came on, and——”

“ Ah ! it was March when he came by his end. The 3d of March, at half-past one in the morning, they tell me, ma’am.”

“ The lady has painted a good many of the guard, though,” continued Rebecca, wishing to change the subject. “ She has a number of pictures of them, some drawing water at the wells on the downs, or sitting polishing their arms in the martello towers, or feeding their pigs at the station-house. We used to hear strangers call those towers very ugly things ; but she has made

a world of pretty pictures of them, looking as different as if they were not the same places."

" She must be a clever lady, then ; for there is nothing to my mind so dull and uniform as those towers. They are worse than the houses I saw last year in the Regent's Park,—all alike, except such little differences as don't signify."

" Mrs. Storey would make even them look different, I fancy : for, as to these towers,—some are white, standing on a yellow sand, with a dark blue sky behind, and the sea a darker blue still,—which you know it is sometimes. And then she makes a shadow from a cloud come over the tower, and the sea all streaked with different colours ; and then it is the turn of the sails at sea to be white,—and a bird, perhaps, hovering over the dark parts. Once she went out when the moon was near the full, the Lieutenant himself carrying her cloak and her sketch-book that time, and she wanting nothing besides but her case of pencils. From that sketch she made a beautiful picture of a grey sea, with the foam white in the moonlight ; and in that case, the tower was quite black on the side of the shadow, and so was the guard on watch, as you saw him between you and the surf."

" I wish she had painted my poor boy, ma'am ; or that he had lived to carry her table. It would have made him so proud ! But you say she was sorry for what happened to him ?"

" Everybody was sorry. Father, for one, has never got over it. But the lady was on the beach when—when——"

“ I know what you mean, my dear. Go on.”

“ Well; she looked so,—you can’t think. Father was quite pale when he came out from among the crowd of children that had got about the mouth of the cavern; but he was nothing to her, in the comparison.”

“ Indeed! Well—my dear——”

“ O! so white, and so grieved, more than frightened. She beckoned father to her, to settle what to do till some of the guard could come; and then she called the children after her, and went away, to take them away, though she could hardly walk.”

“ Dear me!” was all that escaped from nurse, who could not prevent its being seen through her emotion that she was flattered by this tale: and she did not attempt to conceal her gratification at hearing what a crowd attended the funeral, and how the people gathered to read and hear read the proclamation of reward for the detection of the murderers. And all this interest was about her son! Nothing could ever make up to her, she told Rebecca, for his body being hidden for a time, as it was. It would have been such a consolation to her to know that he made as beautiful a corpse as she had often said he would. Those who had seen how her boy looked when he was asleep might be sure that he would look better when he was dead than ever he did when he was alive.

While Rebecca was meditating what she could say by way of consolation for Nicholas not having made so beautiful a corpse as might have

been expected from him, certain sounds from the other side of the room attracted her attention, and half diverted poor nurse's.

"So the Lieutenant said of him . . . O! no need to start, ma'am, at Mr. Brown's rapping his fiddle. He is never really in a passion, though he pretends anger, to keep the young folks in order."

"But they have done something to make him angry. Hark! what a rattling in the fiddle!"

"But look at the corners of Mr. Brown's mouth. He does not know how to help laughing all the time."

"As the children find out," observed Rebecca, seeing how the boys peeped over one another's shoulders to see the effect of the old joke of putting pease into a violin.

"And the girls are all huddled together, not a bit like young ladies," added nurse, moving solemnly towards her charge, patting their backs, chucking their chins, and ascertaining that their feet were in the first position. Alas! they were in none of the five lawful positions.

"Let us see what Adèle will make of her positions," whispered Lucy, as she saw the little French girl led out, to take, as was supposed, her first lesson. "She does not seem to mind it; but she will when she finds she cannot keep her balance in the curtsey at the last."

She was surprised that Mr. Brown tuned his violin. Music was not wanted for teaching the positions. Mr. Brown must be in an absent fit;

and Adèle must be very conceited to smile and look at her ease, on such an occasion. When she should have learned two years, and be able to dance the same quadrilles as Lucy, she might look at ease, and welcome: but already——

Already Adèle showed that she knew one position at least. Before the words “ Point the toe, ma’am,” had passed the dancing-master’s lips, the toe was pointed as if the whole foot was made of something as flexible as the thin sole of the little shoe.

“ I do believe Adèle can dance,” burst from Lucy’s lips, as the fiddle-bow gave its last flourish before making music. There was no further room for doubt, though much for wonder. Adèle sped away,—much as if she was winged: round and round,—hither and thither,—up and down and across, not half so much out of breath with the exertion as Lucy was with witnessing it, and with some thoughts which came into her mind. “ What a silly, stupid, vain thing I have been! I hope Adèle and Mademoiselle did not find out that I wanted to show off to them. How very bad Adèle must think my dancing, to be sure! I did hear the windows rattle once, when I had jumped very high; and Adèle comes down as light as a feather. I wish we could get back to two o’clock again. If I could make them all forget this last hour, I would never show off again; at least, not till I was sure that I could do a thing better than other people.” And Lucy held her fan to her chin to watch the rest of Adèle’s performance in mute admiration.

"Look, now, at that child of mine, with her fan at her chin, of all places!" observed nurse, a-hemming to catch Lucy's attention, and then bridling, and placing her knitting-needles (for nurse carried her knitting everywhere but to church, and there fell asleep for want of it) in the position in which she thought a fan ought to be held. Lucy, vexed to be interrupted in her scrutiny, and so often chidden, tossed her fan into her sister's lap, and turned to Mademoiselle to talk, and thereby avoid the necessity of perceiving nurse's signs.

"Ay, that's the way children do," said nurse; "that was just as my poor boy used to turn and get away from me, when I had been whipping him, all for his good, as I used to tell him, and to make a great man of him. He never liked it, nor saw what a great man he might be some day, guarding his country on the top of those cliffs, and dying, and all."

"And all for nothing," added the matter-of-fact Rebecca; "which must make it the more hurting to you. Nay, now, do not look so offended, as if I had said that Nicholas did not do his duty. He did what he could; but it always seems to me a great fuss about nothing."

"About nothing, ma'am? Is smuggling nothing?"

"That Coast Guard can't prevent smuggling, after all; and if they could, is not it a much cheaper way of preventing it, to make smuggling not worth while? Here, with all their spying, and searching, and seizing, they can lay their

hands on only 5000*l.* worth of smuggled silk in a year, while we all know that fifty times that much comes to be worn. Is not it a great fuss about nothing to risk men's lives for a little matter like that? And they get no more in proportion of tobacco or spirits, or anything else; so, as father says, they might as well put smuggling out of our thoughts at once, or let us do it in peace and quiet. Father has had no peace and quiet this long while, nor ever will have till we find him something to do; and that is hard to find. There is my brother out of the Custom-house, too, being no longer wanted now they are reducing the business and the salaries, and even talking of shutting up the Custom-house."

" You ought to be sorry, then, that people smuggle less than they did,—as sorry as I fancy your father is, my dear."

" Why, as for that, it is very well to be in the Custom-house, to collect the dues the government ought to have; but, for my part, I never liked my brother's having to look to the seized goods, which sometimes happened to be what he would rather have seen anywhere else. If he had at once set himself to something else——"

" You had better send him here; my master wants more hands."

" With all my heart. If he had set himself to supply people's demands at home, instead of preventing their being supplied from abroad, it would have been all very well. But he liked better to marry, and live upon my father, (supposing father to be rich,) than to work at a new

business ; and now I must keep school, and do what I can for them all. Dear me ! what a pretty dance that is ! I do not know what I am to do, if the parents expect my girls to dance in that manner. I forgot to look at Miss Lucy this time. Oh, ma'am, what can be the matter with her ? Do look how she is crying. Bless her poor heart ! how the tears run down !"

Lucy did, at this moment, exhibit a somewhat extraordinary spectacle,—weeping and cutting capers, sobbing and attitudinizing, and looking dolorously in the face of her partner (one of the Master Bremes) whenever the turns of the dance obliged them to regard each other. If she would have given any rational excuse for her emotion, she would have been excused from dancing in tears ; but she was mute, and must therefore take her turn with her companions. The fact was, that, while standing up and waiting for the signal to begin, Lucy had chanced to turn her eyes on a mirror that hung opposite, and to see a young gentleman behind her wriggling in imitation of her earlier exploits of this day ; and, what was worse, she saw that Mr. Brown indulged in a broad grin at the joke. Not all her attempts to think of something pleasant,—of her new frock, Mademoiselle's museum, and the kitten promised by Adèle,—could enable her to keep down her tears. They only came the faster the more she struggled against them ; and all hope of concealing them was over before Rebecca's kind heart became moved by her sorrow, and Adèle squeezed in sympathy the hand which

she encountered in the course of the figure. This sympathy only aggravated the evil: it caused a long, crowing sob to resound through the room, moving the boys to laughter, and everybody else to pity.. It was a lost case, and the credit of the day,—of Adèle's first day at the dancing-school,—was irretrievable.

Mademoiselle removed to a seat next nurse, to inquire what could have been the matter with Lucy all this day; and when told that she had been well and in high spirits up to the moment of entering the room, she was anxious to be allowed to feel her pulse, and ascertain whether there was fever in the case,—nothing short of fever being, in her opinion, sufficient to account for her alternate boisterousness and melancholy. Lucy being surrendered to Mademoiselle, presently began to grow calm. The scarlet flush which had spread over her neck faded, and the sobs subsided, as she assured her friend that she was not at all ill: it was all her own fault. This mystery was received in respectful silence, and a long pause ensued, at the end of which Lucy looked up through her tears to say,—

“ How beautifully Adèle dances ! ”

“ Yes, she dances prettily; but she wants practice, and does not take exercise enough; and that is the reason why we have brought her to learn again. Adèle is a lazy girl in some things; are you not, Adèle ? ”

“ But where did she learn to dance ? I never saw such dancing. I do not believe anybody here will ever dance so well. There's Nancy

Breme: her feet go well enough, but she pokes; and her sister carries her head high enough,—mighty high,—like the proud that are going to have a fall, nurse says; but she turns in the left foot, as Mr. Brown is for ever telling her. And there is——”

“ Well, well; we will not dispute Adèle's dancing better than any body here.”

“ O, but I was going to say myself too. I meant to find fault with my own dancing, and Charlotte's.”

“ No occasion, my dear. I have heard what Mr. Brown has to say about it, you know; and he is a better judge than either of us. Perhaps you will go with us to Lyons, some day, and see where Adèle used to dance, under the chestnuts by the river-side. Or, if you must have boards to dance on, you shall go to M. Carillon's country-house, where you may waltz in his summer saloon, with roses hanging in at the window.”

“ Is that the M. Carillon who sent you those beautiful shells? And is his great new present come for your museum?”

“ It is on its way, and we may hear of its arrival any day. You shall come and see it when it is unpacked and in its place. Now, do you think you can dance again? Mr. Brown looks as if he wanted a partner for that merry boy.”

“ O, I cannot dance with him,” exclaimed Lucy. “ Yes, I will, though he did laugh at me. I find fault with other people, I know, so I suppose it is fair that they should with me.”

And she started up, and offered herself to dance ; and a sign from the good-natured Mr. Brown forbade any one from staring at her red eyes.

" Well, ma'am," said Rebecca to nurse, " and now that I have seen Miss Lucy comfortable again, I must go. I'm sure if you know of any delicate children, or others that do not want a finer education than we can give them, you will think of dame and I."

" Yes, indeed, my dear, for the sake of my poor son. Thank you, I'm sure, for all you have told me about him ; and if your father should happen to come, so as to give me a call, I think he might manage to remember a little more. And give my respects to the Lieutenant's lady, and tell her that I consider my son honoured by her preference ; and tell——"

" I have been thinking, Mrs. Nicholas, whether you could not come down among us. You will be sure to see Mrs. Story yourself then ; and we would make you heartily welcome in our way."

" What ! to see the very place ? The cliffs, and the beach, and the very cave and all ! O, my dear ! Well, we will see ; and many thanks to you."

Rebecca thought it right to advertise her intended school in every possible manner, and therefore made an effort to mention her plan to Mr. Brown, observing that he was probably in the way of hearing of children who wanted sea-air and nursing ; and that they would be well

taken care of, though she could not pretend to have them taught such dancing as she had seen that day.

Mr. Brown smirked, said something about reviving breezes, native elasticity, natural grace, and the hand of art, and bowed her out with an emphatic screech of his instrument, just at the moment that she was declaring him very kind.

The remainder of the lesson was passed in silence by the higher powers, as nurse could not bring herself to speak of the subject uppermost in her thoughts,—her poor son,—to a French woman, whom, as being French, she considered as in some sort, concerned in his murder.

CHAPTER V.

HATE AND HAND-BILLS.

WHEN Mademoiselle returned to her own drawing-room, she found her brother there,—an unexpected visitor at this time of day, when he was usually engaged in his counting-house. He was standing at the window, with his eyes fixed upon a newspaper, which he might or might not be reading, so completely was his attitude one of meditation.

“ I have waited for you,” he said ; “ I wished to see you before I went out again. Are you ready to go back to France ? ”

“ To France ! Is there to be a war ? ”

"Only that war which wars of arms bring on,—war against classes and individuals, arising out of national jealousy. No, thank God! the slaughter of tens of thousands is at an end; and what matters the ruin of one insignificant Frenchman?"

"Ruin! Are they going to ruin you?" asked his sister, her eyes flashing.

"No anger, my dear," said M. Gaubion. "Judge not these English people by the example of our happier countrymen. They have been trained for centuries to suspicions like this;"—(handing the newspaper to his sister, and pointing out a paragraph.) "I was aware of this training, and I ought not to have come. It is for the Frenchmen of two centuries hence to be the brethren of Englishmen."

"But you can disprove this charge," urged Mademoiselle; "or, as the duty of proof rests with your enemies, you can dare them to the proof. Let them show, if they can, that you carry on your business as a cloak to hidden practices. Let them lay a finger on a single article smuggled by you. They cannot; and this is a mere calumny,—a newspaper calumny."

M. Gaubion pointed out that the charge was contained in a report of some significance, and was not one of the common paragraphs which no wise man thinks it worth while to be vexed at. Its appearance in such a mode indicated a hostility in persons interested in the silk trade, which would probably end in sending a peaceably-disposed man home again.

" I have been trying to make myself an English woman ever since I came," observed Mademoiselle, " but I will cease the endeavour ; it is better to be French."

" Nay, France may blush for similar follies. How long was it before we had men wise enough to discover, that if France received cottons, it must be in return for something that France had produced ! When some few perceived this, what cries issued from our work-shops ! What certainty did some feel that the total disorganization of society would ensue ! How others rehearsed the dirge which must presently be sung over the tomb of French industry ! And who knows but that a Manchester man might then have been torn in pieces by the prejudiced operatives of France ?"

" But did you not say just now that the English are peculiarly prejudiced on this matter ?"

" They have been made so by their national circumstances. Their manufacturers and merchants have had a greater voice in the government than is allowed in many other countries ; and this voice has for ever cried out, ' Protect us ! '—' Encourage us ! ' Then of course followed the cry of other classes, ' Be impartial ! '—' Protect us also.'"

" Ah ! the difficulty is to stop. Each new protection raises clamour for more ; and some are left dissatisfied after all is done that can be done. It becomes a scramble which class can cost the country most ; how each article can be made dearest, and therefore how the people may

be soonest impoverished at home, and prevented from selling abroad on equal terms with their neighbours. So it would be if protection were universal ; but surely it cannot be so in England, or any where else ?"

" Not altogether ; but her rulers have found themselves perplexed by her land-owners and tillers being jealous of the manufacturers ; and the ship-owners, of the agricultural class ; and the labourers, most justly, of all these. There will be no peace till the just plea is admitted, that the interest of those who consume is the paramount interest ; and that the rule of commerce at home and abroad, therefore, is that all shall be left free to buy where they can buy cheapest. The observance of this rule would soon quench the desire for protection, as the protected would have no customers but those from whose pockets their bounties are yielded. Yet this rule is the last which the ministries of England have till now regarded."

" Strange ! since the consumers are so much more considerable a body than any class of the protected."

" Nothing is strange when there is a want of money. Does not a minor make over his property to sharpers for his debts before he has enjoyed it ? Do not the besieged in a city revel in food and wine while starvation impends ? If so, why should not a government, involved in ruinous wars and other extravagance, stake the commerce of the country for an immediate supply of money ? When new taxes must be im-

posed, submission has been bought by new protections. The example once set, other restrictions have followed, till those who possess nothing but the fruits of their own labour bear the whole burden. They pay to the landlords, that bread may be dear ; they pay to the India House, that tea may be rendered a blameable luxury to them, and that what is woven in eastern looms may be out of their reach ; they paid for the wars which occasioned the restraints which they now pay to keep up."

" But why do they thus pay ? And is not all this a reason why they should welcome you, instead of desiring a continuance of their bondage ? "

" Slaves often hug their chains as ornaments, and the ignorant mistake custom for right. My enemies are not aware how they have suffered from the long custom of restriction ; and it was my folly to expect a welcome from the poor, who have ever been taught, that what a foreigner gains an Englishman must lose ; or from masters who have been cradled in fear, not by the generous nurse,—competition, but by the jealous demon,—monopoly."

" Truly," exclaimed Mademoiselle, " the lark is likely to be hooted and clawed if she ventures among the owls. You are right, brother ; there is nothing for it but fleeing away."

" These owls being even now transforming into day-birds, and the lark having once been an owl herself, both should have patience with each other," replied her brother, laughing. " But

though the hooting may be borne for awhile, the tearing to pieces is hardly to be awaited in patience. I have been growing more unpopular every day, my dear ; I see it in many faces, whenever I look beyond my own people. They like me, I believe ; but they will soon be threatened out of working for me. They will also seize on this imputation, that I make use of them as a screen for practices which take work out of the hands of their brethren. After they have learned—only through my zeal overcoming their reluctance—to rival us in the niceties of our art, they will drive us away as if we had done them an injury."

" And yet you will not let me reproach them."

" If you must blame, blame the selfish monarchs, the temporising ministers, the barbarous aristocracies, the vain-glorious generations of the people that have passed away,—rather than the descendants on whom they have entailed the consequences of their mutual follies. The spirit of barbarism lingers about its mortal remains. Barbaric wars are hushed, the dead having buried their dead ;—Barbaric shows are fading in splendour, and are as much mocked at as admired ;—Barbaric usurpations are being resisted and supplanted day by day ; but the infatuation which upheld them so long is not altogether dispelled ; and if we rashly suppose that it is, we deserve to suffer for coming within its reach. I was wrong to settle among a people who invited us to a contraband trade, were driven by their own vicissitudes to offer us, with much reluctance, a

lawful one ; and now, through the hardness of their own terms, suspect us wrongfully, and make a great crime of that which they themselves have taught us."

" They seem to forget that we are on equal terms of obligation ; that we French take as much of the produce of their industry as they take of ours."

" I shall urge this on our jealous neighbours, and will go as an equal to a brother manufacturer for counsel," observed M. Gaubion. " Culver knows little of me, but he holds many of my principles, and to him will I now go. If he thinks this charge of importance, I will deal with it as he advises ; if not, I will strive to think so too."

Whether the charge was of importance was decided before Mr. Culver could be appealed to. As M. Gaubion pursued his way through the streets, hand-bills met his eye at every turn, in which was contained the newspaper paragraph that had troubled him, accompanied by unfriendly comments, and hints that the Treasury was well aware of the nature of the Frenchman's establishment, and of the means by which it was supported. He saw knots of people gathered round the windows where this hand-bill was stuck up, and showing it to one another in the alleys. He would fain have got possession of one to put into Culver's hands, but did not choose to run the risk of being discovered by making the request in a foreign accent. He could see nobody who appeared to be employed in distributing

them, or who had two copies. At length he passed a little shop, where a boy was leaning over the counter, apparently spelling out the contents of the bill, while another copy hung in the window. M. Gaubion marched straight in, took the bill from the window, pointing to the one on the counter, and walked out again, the boy crying after him—

“ Stop, sir—stop; we can’t spare it. You can get one by asking at the——”

The rest was lost upon the escaped stranger, who walked on unobserved, and meeting no one whom he knew till he arrived opposite Cooper’s door.

At Cooper’s door was a knife-grinder, grinding Mrs. Cooper’s scissors as she stood by, and making sparks at such a rate as to delight master Ichabod, who stood, now holding by his mother’s gown and winking, and now clapping his hands in delight. As soon as Mrs. Cooper perceived M. Gaubion at some distance on the other side of the street, she pulled her gown from the child’s grasp, ran in, and instantly returned, followed presently by her husband, who pretended to be talking to the knife-grinder, but was evidently watching the approach of the gentleman. When M. Gaubion was near enough to be saluted, Cooper offered him a shy, uncertain bow, but seemed very ready to speak when the gentleman crossed over to ask him if he knew how long this hand-bill had been in circulation.

“ We were just wondering, sir, my wife and I, whether you had seen it. I hope you don’t

mind it, sir ; that is, I hope you have no reason to mind it."

" Why, Cooper, you do not believe this bill ?"

Cooper believed that many people did not think what mischief they were about in smuggling. The Spitalfields men had reason enough to know this ; but it had been so long the custom to drive a profitable contraband trade, without being thought the worse of, that if some people did it still, it was no great wonder ; though he must think it a sin and a shame.

" But such is not my trade, Cooper ; I have not smuggled a single piece."

" Well, it is very lucky if you can say so, sir, for there is nothing the masters and men are so jealous of now. If you had profited by a contraband trade, you would not have been the only person in the present company that must take to something less profitable."

The gipsy knife-grinder looked up saucily, and jabbered a few words of what might, by an acute discerner, be detected for French ;—such French as might be picked up by means of half an hour's talk with a Guernsey person, four times a year.—On being asked how he relished the change from making moonlight trips and fighting midnight battles to tinkering and grinding among the abodes of men ; he answered that if his profits were smaller than they had been, they were better than he had expected when he chose this neighbourhood for the scene of his operations. A few years before, all the knives and scissors were at the pawnbroker's ; it did not signify

whether pans and kettles were battered or whole, as there was nothing to put into them ; and there was little employment in chair-mending, as the people sat on the floor, or ate their crust standing. Now that there was smoke in almost every chimney, and that little men,—nodding to Ichabod,—were allowed to pull rushen seats to pieces, a gipsy's occupation was a better one than he had once known it.

“ 'Twould be a thousand pities you should have to change your trade, sir,” said Cooper ; “ and if, as you say, there is no truth in what is said about the smuggling. But are you sure you are right in coming abroad this evening, sir ? I don't like saying disagreeable things ; but that is better than leaving you, without warning, to suffer them. From what I see and hear,—and my wife too,—I should be afraid you might be roughly spoken to. 'Tis the best kindness to all parties to keep out of sight when any are disposed to mischief.—Do I know how long this has been brewing ? Why, no. There has been whispering, to my knowledge, for weeks ; and it is four days since my child called us to see the boys acting the Frenchman under the windows ; and the grown-up folks said some rough words then. But I, for one, never saw the bill till this day.”

Cooper now spoke a few words to his wife, which seemed to dismay her much. She pulled his arm, twitched his coat, and looked miserable while he proceeded to say,

...“ If I might take the liberty of so offering, sir,

I would propose to step with you, wherever you are going. I would say 'behind' you, but that it would not answer the purpose so well. I am pretty well known as a sound English master's man, and——"

"Prejudice on every side!" exclaimed the Frenchman, in his heart. "This man evidently believes the charge, or part of it, and he offers me his protection, on the ground that he is known not to like me and my doings!"

Cooper's courtesy was coolly declined, and M. Gaubion walked on to ascertain elsewhere the origin of the calumny.

Mr. Culver recommended his keeping quiet, and, if there was no foundation for the report, it would soon blow over. "If there was no foundation!" The same doubt appeared on every hand.

"Just tell me," asked Gaubion, "why I should drive a contraband trade, when I might legally import, if I chose?"

"The duty is high enough still, sir, to induce smuggling in certain favourable cases. I was an advocate for the trade being thrown open; and being so, I am now for such a duty as shall put us on a par with your countrymen. I think a duty of twelve or fifteen per cent. would do this, and leave no temptation to cheat us out of our market. I should have advised a higher duty some time ago; but smuggling is made easier now by so much silk being brought in legally; and I think we should be better protected by the lower duty than the higher."

"I see," observed the Frenchman, "that in

this case, as in others, some of those who are the very parties supposed to be protected are the most willing to resign the protection. It is declared to be a difficult thing to get a protection repealed ; but the difficulty does not always rest with the protected party."

" That entirely depends on the state of his affairs," replied Mr. Culver. " If the protection leaves him his business in a flourishing state,—which seldom happens for many years together,—or even permits it to remain in a state which barely justifies its being carried on, he may dread something worse happening by the removal of protecting duties ; but if, for a length of time, his trade declines, and the faster the more government meddles with it, he will quickly learn, as I have learned, to preach from the text, ' Protect the people's pockets, and we shall have as fair a chance as we want.' The difficulty, sir, arises from the number of interests mixed up in an arbitrary system like that of protections. While people and money are wasted in spying, and threatening, and punishing, when they ought to be producing, there will be many an outcry against a change which would deprive them of their office, though it would set them free for one much more profitable to the people. Then again, if persons have been bribed to pay a new tax by the promise of protection, it is difficult to oblige them to go on paying the tax, and give up the bribe, unless they have a mind so to do. They talk of injustice ; and with some reason. The

long and short of the matter is, that once having got into an unnatural system, it costs a world of pains and trouble to get out of it again."

"The only way is to go back to some plain clear principle, and keep it in view while loosening the entanglements which have been twisted about it."

"When do you find governments willing to do that?" asked Mr. Culver.

"In this case it would be very easy, there being one, and but one sure test of the advantageousness of trade in any article of commerce; —the profit that it yields. If a merchant finds it more profitable to sell his goods abroad than at home, he will send them abroad, without the help of the government. If the contrary, it is wasting just so much money to tempt him to deal abroad. If less profit is made by manufacturing silks in England than by getting them from abroad in return for cottons, whatever is spent in supporting the silk manufacture is so much pure loss."

"But you do not think that this is actually the case with our English silk manufacture?"

"I do not; as I prove by becoming an English silk manufacturer myself. For this very reason, I see that there is no need of the protection of government. The interference of government is either hurtful or useless. Foreign goods either are or are not cheaper than home-made goods. If they are cheaper, it is an injury to the buyer to oblige him to purchase at home.

If they are not, there is no occasion to oblige him to purchase at home. He will do so by choice."

" Aye ; but the buyer is the last person considered in these arrangements. It is hard to discover why, if the merchant can supply more cheaply than the manufacturer, the customer should be taxed to uphold the manufacturer. I have no wish that my customers should be so taxed ; for I know that instead of upholding me, they will leave me and buy elsewhere. If they and I are left free to observe the true rule of interest,—to buy in the cheapest market we can discover, and sell in the dearest, we shall find our interests agree, be fast friends, and make commerce the advantageous thing it was designed to be."

" That is, an indirect source of wealth to all. How can rulers help seeing that as nothing is produced by commerce, as it is an indirect source of wealth,—a mere exchange of equivalents of a lower value which become equivalents of a higher value by the exchange,—the more direct the exchange, the more valuable it is to both parties ? If a portion of the value is to be paid to a third party for deranging the terms of the bargain, the briskness of exchanges will be impaired in proportion to the diminution of their profit."

" And while my customers are prevented from buying in the cheapest market, I am, by the same interference, hindered,—aye prohibited, selling in the dearest. My customers complain that my

silks are higher priced than those of your country; but give me the means of a fair competition with your countrymen, and I will engage to get a higher price,—(that is, more commodities in exchange,)—in some parts of the world than any duchess in London will give me. The price would be lower to the buyer, but higher to me."

" I suppose the excuse for these protections in the beginning was that the infant manufacture might not be hindered by the vast growth of the same manufacture abroad. Your rulers expected that your art would be sooner perfected if fostered."

" And has it proved so? Were we not, three years ago, far inferior to you in the goodness of our fabrics? And if we are now overtaking you, is it not owing to our protection being partly removed? Was not any immediate improvement more than counterbalanced by the waste of establishing and upholding an artificial system, of diverting capital from its natural channels, and of feeding, or half feeding the miserable thousands who were beggared and starving under the fluctuations which our impolicy had caused?—The businesses which have been the most carefully protected,—the West India trade, agriculture, and till lately, the silk trade,—may have been very profitable for a short period, but they have suffered more from fluctuations, have caused more national waste, and more misery to whole classes of people than any that have been less interfered with. The cotton trade is the one to which we owe the power of sustaining our unequalled national burdens, subsistence for

1,400,000 of our population, and incalculable advantages of exchange with countries in many latitudes ; and the cotton manufacture has been left unprotected from the very beginning."

" Your ribbon weavers of Coventry do not, however, appear disposed to take care of themselves. How loud are their complaints of distress !"

" And the distress is real : but it belongs to the old system, and it would have been not distress only, but annihilation, if the introduction of the new system had been long delayed. Coventry once believed herself destined to supply the whole world with ribbons. Then she made the sad discovery that she must be content with the home market ; and now that this also fails, Coventry complains of the government, instead of bestirring herself. While our cotton men have been bright and brisk, depending on their own exertions, Coventry has been dull and lazy, depending on the prohibitive system. One of her looms prepares five times less ribbons, with an equal amount of manual labour, as your improved French loom ; and she is reasonable enough to expect that the world shall buy her ribbons instead of those of her rivals, if our government can but be brought to order the world so to do."

" Her manufacture would plainly have expired outright, if the government had not set her free to improve."

" To be sure it would ; and it is not overgracious in Coventry to take this act of justice, —tardy though it be,—as an injury. Coventry and old governments have been in the wrong to-

gether. Let the mischief that results be made a lesson to all by referring it to its true cause ; and then there may be a chance of such an increase of prosperity as may remove all disposition to recrimination."

" This is exactly what I have long wished to behold in my own country," observed the Frenchman. " Protection has done little less mischief there than here ; but unhappily this is a case in which countries are as unwilling to take precedence as court ladies are to yield it. Each country refuses to be first. All cry, ' We will wait till others repeal their prohibitive systems ; ' as if every new channel of exchange opened were not a good."

" And as if commerce consisted of arbitrary gifts, and not of an exchange of equivalents," replied Culver. " It may be a vexation and disadvantage to us, if you take no hardware and cottons from us ; but that is no reason why we should not provide ourselves with your claret and brandy ; as, if you cannot receive our hardware and cottons, you will take something else. If you will take nothing of ours, you can sell us nothing of yours, and the injury is as great to you as to us. But we should punish ourselves unnecessarily, if we refused your brandies because you refuse our scissors and knives. It is saying, ' Because we cannot sell cottons, neither will we sell woollens.' It is being like the cross child who sobs, ' You won't let me have custard, so I won't have any dinner at all.' If governments will only, as I said before, let the people's purses

alone, other governments must necessarily do the same. If your French government lets your people buy cottons in the cheapest market,—that is, here,—our government cannot prevent our getting our claret in exchange in the cheapest market,—that is, at Bordeaux. A much more comfortable and profitable method to both parties than doing without cotton and claret, or paying more for making them at home than they are worth."

"How is it," M. Gaubion now inquired, "that holding the same doctrine with myself as to the principle of trade at large, you can yet be jealous of me because I am a foreigner? I use the word 'jealous' as not too strong; for surely, Mr. Culver, your reception of me was but half-amicable."

Mr. Culver's manner immediately cooled as he observed that there was much room left yet for unfair dealing; much encouragement to underhand schemes. He kept himself clear of accusing any man, while matters were in doubt; particularly a gentleman with whom he had the honour of only a slight acquaintance; but the duty was undeniably still high enough to tempt to a contraband trade. It was unquestionable that smuggling was still carried on, and, to however small an extent, still to the injury of the home manufacturer; and he, being a home manufacturer, must wish to have the offence brought home to the right person. No man could desire more earnestly than he did that such an offence should be precluded by good management; but,

till it was so, all who hoped for his friendship must clear themselves from the charge of taking his means of subsistence from under him.

“ But how am I to clear myself ? ” asked M. Gaubion. “ This is what I came to ask of you ; and but now you advised me to keep quiet. I am not to clear myself ; but I am not to have your friendship till I have cleared myself.—I must, I will clear myself, Mr. Culver ; and you shall tell me how. Will an oath do it ? ”

Mr. Culver drily replied that he required no oath.

“ You ! no. I would not offer my oath to a private individual who would not take my word. It must be to some official person. Tell me, Mr. Culver, will an oath do ? ”

Mr. Culver believed that oaths were such common things in commercial and Custom-house affairs that they were not thought much of.

“ True indeed ! ” exclaimed the Frenchman ; “ and alas for those who set up oaths against the plain and acknowledged interests of nations, classes and individuals ! How shall the sin of tempting to perjury be wiped from their souls ? If my oath will not avail, to what species of proof shall I resort ? ”

“ To none, till there is a distinct charge brought against you, fortified by particulars. It is your interest to keep quiet.”

“ I will not stay to receive this advice of yours a third time,” replied M. Gaubion. “ I will go for advice to one who is not jealous of me ; and if such an one I cannot find, I will, stranger as

I am, act without counsel, without aid against my enemies. I may be compelled to return whence I came, but I will not go till I have justified myself for my country's sake."

He went out hastily, leaving Mr. Culver in no very pleasant mood, in the conflict between his liberal principles and his petty personal jealousies. He hummed a tune as he took up the obnoxious handbill, whistled as he laid it down again, and ended with frowning because it was a close evening, and flinging his pen into a corner because he made a blot on beginning to write.

M. Gaubion found nothing in the streets as he pursued his way home to make him desire Cooper's escort. They were remarkably quiet, and he supposed that the weavers had resorted to their gardens for their evening amusement, or had gone to rest in preparation for the early toil of the next day. When he was within a few hundred yards of his own house, however, a hum came upon his ear, like the murmur of a multitude of voices at a distance. After listening for a moment, and satisfying himself that the cries which mingled with the hum must proceed from some unusual cause, he ran forward, trying to resist the persuasion that all this must have some connexion with himself, and to decide that a fire had probably broken out somewhere in his neighbourhood.

It was now dusk. A few lamps showed a flame uncongenial with the prevailing light, and the lamp-lighter was seen, now flitting from post to post with his ladder on his shoulder, and now

pausing for an instant, with his foot on the lowest rung, to listen. A lamp-lighter was a safe person of whom to make inquiry, M. Gaubion thought ;—one who had no interest in commercial squabbles, and would not betray him on account of his foreign speech. Of him, therefore, the Frenchman inquired what was going on ; but the man could offer only conjecture. He had not yet lighted the lamps in that direction, and he did not think he should carry his lantern much further till he knew whether they had not fire enough and too much already. M. Gaubion passed on for better satisfaction ; and as he threaded his way among the loiterers, runners, and gazers, who began to thicken as he proceeded, he longed for an English tongue for one minute, that he might learn that which every one else seemed now to know. He was glad to perceive a woman's head emerge from a vault, and gaze slowly round, as if at a loss to account for the bustle. He took his stand for a minute within hearing of the inquiry which he hoped she would make.

“ Why, I say there ! ” cried she presently, “ is there a fire ? ”

The runner applied to shook his head, and passed on.

“ You, there ! Can you tell me what it is if it's not a fire ? ”

The boy snapped his fingers at her, and ran on.

“ What, are ye all running after you don't know what ? What is it, I say ? ”

“ Come and see, if you can't ask civilly,”

growled an old man, making his way on his two sticks as fast as he could.

"What care I what's the matter?" muttered the woman, turning to descend once more into the vault.

"O, ask this person!" cried M. Gaubion, "He looks as if he could and would tell us."

"Ask him yourself, can't ye, instead of watching and listening to what I may say. If you have nothing better to do than that, you might go and see for yourself, I think."

As he turned to go away, the lady condescended to make one more effort to satisfy her curiosity.

"It is something about the Frenchman, I don't know exactly what," was the reply. "Something about his having smuggled goods while he pretended to weave them. They are looking for him, to give him three groans, or a ride, or a ducking, or something of the sort."

"Perhaps they won't have to look very long if they come to the right place," observed the woman, with an ill-natured laugh towards M. Gaubion, who did not stay to hear more. When he arrived at the end of his own street, his first impression was that all was quiet, and the place empty; but a moment convinced him that the dark mass extending up and down from his own house, which he had taken for shadow, was in reality a crowd. The occasional movement of a woman with a white cap, or an apron over her head, showed him what the picture really was; and this was the only stir seen for awhile.

"O dear! sir, O sir, is it you? Let me ad-

vise you to turn back," said a respectable body who stood at her shop-door, and instantly knew M. Gaubion. "It is as much as your life is worth, sir, to go near. There! here comes somebody out of the crowd, I declare! Bless you, sir, do take care of yourself!" and she stepped backwards, and shut the door full in the gentleman's face.

"You take good care of yourself, at least," thought the persecuted man to himself. "You are afraid even to ask me to shelter myself with you from this storm. But you need not have feared. I must first learn how my sisters are."

This was done by boldly pushing through a crowded thoroughfare into the back row, stepping over a paling or two, taking the liberty of crossing two or three gardens, dispersing a few broods of chickens by the way, climbing a wall, crawling along the roof of an outhouse, where the pigeons wondered at the new companion who had come among them, and finally taking a vigorous leap just by his own back-door. No hue and cry disturbed these manœuvres. There was less danger of this than there would have been in the dead of night. All eyes were more securely absent than if they had been closed in sleep, for they were occupied with what was passing in front of the house.

"Mercy on us! here they come in from behind!" cried the terrified kitchen damsels as their master burst open the back-door. "God save us! it's my master himself, and he'll be mur-
~~dered~~. O, sir, why did not you stay away?"

"Fasten up that door," said the gentleman. "As one got in that way, more might. Lock and bolt it.—Where is your mistress; and Miss Adèle, where is she?"

"Upstairs, and towards the front, sir; and do you know, Mademoiselle has been to the lower windows, behaving as brave as a general; so miserable about you, sir, all the time. She went down to tell the people that you were not here; but she has been in such a terror every moment, lest you should come and thrust yourself into the midst of it. We have been thinking of all ways to get somebody out to give you warning; but there was nobody but us women. Mademoiselle wished to have gone herself; but, besides that we could not think of such a thing, she was wanted to amuse the people with observing her, as she says. So she keeps about the front windows. We think some help will be here soon, to do away with their idea of waylaying you; but my mistress is in mortal terror, though she is above showing it to the wretches without."

"Well, tell her that I am safe in the house—"

"And upstairs, sir? You will go upstairs out of sight?"

"Willingly: into the loft, if it will make my sisters any easier. But do not go as if you had a piece of news to tell her. Let it drop quietly, that the people may not find out that she is hearing anything particular."

The maid performed her office with some prudence, and brought back a message that Mademoiselle dared not come to speak to him yet;

but that if he would go into the back attic, Adèle should visit him presently with some refreshment.

With deep disgust at being compelled thus to skulk on his own premises, the gentleman ascended to the top of the house, and venturing to take a brush from his own chamber as he passed, was occupied in brushing his coat when his younger sister appeared. She nearly let fall the tray she was carrying, as she cried,

“They have had hold of you, after all, I do believe!”

“What! because I look a strange figure? No, my dear. This dust is from the wall I had to get over, and these cobwebs from the top of the outhouse.”

“How horrid! But the first thing I am to tell you is——What are you listening to? Yes, it is! It is a band. There are soldiers or somebody coming at last. We thought they never would. We thought nobody would help us.—Stay! where are you going? Into the front room? O, you must not! Indeed, indeed you must not go there!” And Adèle hung her whole weight upon her brother’s arm, and screamed.

“Hush! hush! you silly child,” he said. “One scream may do more harm than anything I mean to venture. I will only peep from the corner of the blind to see what is coming; that is all.”

Adèle sobbed with terror as her brother performed the projected feat.

“Ah, there is some protection coming for us,

I suppose, by the crowd 'making way. And yet the people do not look frightened. Nobody moves off. Music! what wretched music! It cannot possibly belong to a regiment. A drum and two fifes. What is it that they are playing, Adèle?"

Adèle sobbed out that it was the "Dead March in Saul," she believed.

" Ah! so it is! Now, my dear, come here! Do look! It will make you laugh, instead of crying. What is all this about, do you think?"

" What a ridiculous figure!" exclaimed Adèle, laughing. " How can grown-up men play with such a thing?"

" It is meant for me. Do not you see?"

" But you do not wear powder, nor a long pigtail all down your back: and you do not stick out your elbows in that ridiculous way."

" Some people think that all Frenchmen do so; and many in this crowd—most of them, I believe—have never seen me. But you will perceive presently how they would treat me, if they could get hold of me."

M. Gaubion being more inclined to observe in deep silence what was going on than to proffer any further explanations, left his sister to discover for herself that there was a cord round the neck of the effigy, that the piece of wood over its head was meant for a gibbet, and that a double death was to be typified by its fate, preparations being already in progress for a fire in the midst of the crowd.

There was scarcely wood enough collected to

broil the effigy thoroughly, and further contributions were speedily brought in from all quarters, as soon as the want was made known. Men from the neighbourhood brought old lumber which their wives had pointed out as being to be spared. Lads brought pales and faggots, no one knew whence. The very children seemed to catch the spirit, casting from their little hands such bits of paper and of shavings as they could pick up. One poor little fellow, however, was less patriotic than his companions. He cried bitterly at seeing his wheelbarrow sacrificed, and pulled his merciless father's coat till a box on the ear struck him dumb and tearless. It was true the barrow was without a wheel, had lost a leg, and presented only one shaft; but still it was his barrow, and had been used to the last for purposes much more congenial to the child's tastes than roasting a Frenchman.—M. Gaubion internally blessed this child,—not for an instant supposing that anything but attachment to his barrow was the cause of his resistance,—but loving him for being the only one unwilling to feed the insulting fire.

“The very children,” thought he, “that have smiled and nodded at me, when I stepped out of the way of their marbles, and come confidently to me when their kites have fallen over my wall, are at this moment taught to mock and hate me, they know not why. That boy who is pinning the effigy's name—Mounseer Go-be-hung—on its back, was taught to write by my order. There goes my green wicket!—off its hinges, and into

the heap ! The lads that pulled it down have often passed through it with my work under their arms, and my money in their pockets.—O, you fiend of a woman ! Do you put shavings into your infant's hand, that it too may have a share in the inhospitality of your country ? May that infant live to subsist upon my resources, and to make you thank heaven that the Frenchman came among you !—Ah ! you are all calling for fire. By heavens, I believe you will get none ! Yonder housewife shakes her head ; and in the next house they are raking out the fire. There is not a candle to be seen through a window, the whole length of the street. Can it be that my neighbours feel for me ? Alas ! here is a lighted slip of wood procured at last ! Bravo ! good woman ! brave woman ! to empty your pot of beer upon it ! Who is that they have laid hands on there ? The lamp-lighter ; the same that I spoke to. He should not have brought his lantern ! They will take it from him. Not they ! dash it goes against the wall ; and what a yell as its fragments fly ! I *have* friends, I see ; but they are of those who have nothing to do with silk-weaving ; of those who owe nothing to me, instead of those whom I have benefited. Well ; I will not blame the people, but the discipline of jealousy in which they have been brought up.—Here is fire at last ! I will not seek to know who gave it. God forgive him !”

¶ It was enough to madden the most gentle who was interested in the case, to see how the effigy was treated in the fire ;—poked with pitch-forks,

made to dance upon the gibbet, to fold its hands, to turn its labelled back, and nod to the ladies who were supposed to be peeping from some corner of the windows. So searching a glance traversed the whole front of the house from a thousand upturned and gleaming faces, that M. Gaubion felt it necessary to withdraw, and forego the rest of the irritating sight. He could not go out of hearing of his new name,—Mounseer Go-be-hung,—shouted in the intervals between the groans with which the flaming of the last tatters of the effigy was hailed ; but the presence of his sister made him calm. He could not agree in the conviction of the housemaid, that he would be a prodigious favourite with the people in a few days ; like a master in whose family she had once lived, who was burned in effigy one week, and the next, received amidst the touching of hats wherever he went, the question about wages between him and his men having been settled in the interval. M. Gaubion did not stand so good a chance for popularity ;—in the first place, because he was a foreigner ; and in the next, because whatever evils the people were suffering from the speculation and overtrading of their masters, could not be remedied so speedily as a dispute about wages could be temporarily settled. As for dissociating foreigners in the minds of the people, from their hardships,—that was likely to be as much a work of time as the removal of the hardships themselves.

Before the crowd had quite ended their grim ~~pastime~~, the expected interruption happened.

An alarm of the approach of the authorities spread from a considerable distance, and all dispersed hither and thither, leaving it to the winds to play with the smouldering embers, and to the gazers from the surrounding windows to watch the last little puffs of smoke, as they wandered into the upper air.—A thundering rap brought down M. Gaubion, grave and stiff, followed by his sisters, grave and pale, to open the door which the servants could not be induced to unlock and unbar.

When everything had been ascertained from the inhabitants of the house which could be told by the young ladies and the trembling, loquacious servants (at length persuaded to look their protectors in the face, instead of peeping at them over the banisters) about the circumstances of the riot, and from their master about its supposed causes, the magistrate departed, with the persons he brought with him, except one constable who was left to guard the house, and a messenger who seemed to come on other business.

He shortly explained his errand. Taking a newspaper from his pocket, he pointed out that the Secretary of the Treasury, and the whole Board of Customs, were charged with being cognizant of the fact of the foreigner's smuggling transactions, and parties to his scheme for ruining the trade of his neighbours. So grave a charge rendered it necessary for his Majesty's government to sift the matter to the bottom, and to ascertain the real state of the case with regard to the Frenchman, as well as to prove their own in-

nocence. It was possible that irregularities on the part of a mercantile firm might have been connived at by some of the inferior servants of the Customs Board ; and though it was far from being the intention of the Board to impute such irregularities to M. Gaubion, it was desirable that he should, if possible, put it in their power to acquit him wholly of the charge.

“ Thankfully,—most thankfully will I do so,” was his reply. “ How shall we commence the proceeding ?”

“ By your accompanying me with the least possible delay to the Treasury, where your accusers will meet you.”

“ I am ready at this instant. Let us go.—But what kind of proof will be required ? Is it necessary to prepare my proofs, or will a clear head and an honest heart suffice for my defence ?”

The messenger had no orders but to bring the gentleman himself. It was too late this evening ; but he would wait upon him the next morning, to guide him into the presence of his accusers.

This arrangement completely restored M. Gaubion’s spirits. His sister was somewhat fluttered by the idea of such an examination as he was to undergo ; but assented to its being the thing of all others now to be desired. Adèle could not be talked out of the idea that her brother was going to be tried, and that something very dreadful must happen. She cried herself to sleep, to be awakened by visions of the effigy dancing in the flames. Her brother lost even the oppressive sense of being the object of popular

hatred in his satisfaction at being allowed an opportunity of justifying himself, and slept undisturbed by the ghosts of the events of the by-gone day.

CHAPTER VI.

INVESTIGATIONS.

WHILE Mademoiselle was striving to employ herself diligently the next morning, during her brother's absence, three quarters of her acquaintance came to condole, or to enquire, or to use any pretence which might enable them to satisfy their curiosity. Of the remaining fourth part, some had the kindness to stay at home, and content themselves with a message of enquiry how the family found themselves after the alarm of the last evening ; while others contented themselves with remaining at home, and *not* sending, dropping a hint at the breakfast-table that it would be time enough to take notice of past events when it should appear whether the Gaubions could clear themselves, and what would be thought of them henceforward. Mr. Culver left no orders, before he went out, as to what his young people were to do ; and when the question was proposed by themselves, there was a difference of opinion. Nurse believed that foreigners were a bad set altogether, and that it would be better to have nothing more to do with any of

them. Charlotte thought it would look rather odd to break off intercourse so suddenly ; and Lucy offered to vouch for poor Adèle's having done nothing very bad about smuggling, however the case might stand with her brother. The girls agreed that it might be a kindness to take Adèle for the day ; and even nurse was open to the argument that it would be very pleasant to hear the whole story of the riot from the very best authority. The debate ended in nurse and Lucy —Lucy as being Adèle's special companion—setting off to bring her back with them ;—an object less easy of accomplishment than they had imagined.

Being sent for to speak to them in the hall, Adèle appeared, to urge their proceeding to the dining-room.

" Every body is there," said she, " and you will hear all about it, if you will come in. The room is almost full ; but you know most of the people. We never thought of so many coming at once, but it would not do not to see them ; it would make them think there is more the matter than there really is ; and I am sure they all mean to be very kind. Do come in."

In answer to the suggestion that they could hear every thing much more comfortably from her in Devonshire-square, the little French girl positively declined leaving home this day. She gave so many good reasons for her resolve, that there was nothing for it but following her into the parlour, if they wished to carry home any tidings.

"Such a pity, to be sure," Mrs. Piggins was saying, "when you had painted and made all nice so lately. It is but a month, scarcely a month, I think, Betsy, since I got a daub of green paint on my cloak (all my own carelessness, ma'am; I'm sure I don't mean——) from your green wicket, and now it is pulled down and burned to ashes! and the smoke, I see, has blackened the cornice; so lately as it was painted! We just looked up before we knocked at the door, to find whether the front of the house seemed any-how different; and then Betsy pointed out to me that the cornice was blackened."

"And so brutal it was of the people, Mademoiselle," observed Miss Harvey, "to make you light the pile that was to burn your brother. I wonder how you ever did it,—only that I suppose you could not help yourself."

"O, that is quite a mistake," replied Mademoiselle, smiling. "They asked us for fire, and we told them our fires were out; that was all."

"Well, to be sure!" cried Miss Harvey, looking at her sister, "we were told that they dragged you among them, and made you set the bonfire alight with a torch, and that you cried out loud, 'My hand but not my heart consents.' So this is not true?"

Mademoiselle shook her head.

"Then it may not be true either—It is better to ask at once," said the lady, in answer to her sister's wink and frown, "it may not be true either that M. Gaubion was handcuffed when he was fetched away to the Treasury."

"What is that?" asked Mademoiselle, whose ear did not happen to have ever been met by the word, 'handcuffed.'

By gesture, as well as explanation, the sense was made known to her; and then her laugh had as much of indignation as of mirth in it.

"You might have supposed that was false without asking," said the younger Miss Harvey to her sister. "As it was not true that M. Gau-bion had his right arm broken, and that Miss Adèle lay without hopes of recovery——"

"I!" exclaimed Adèle; "they did nothing to me; they never thought about me at all."

"So I find, my dear; but that is the way people will talk."

"Now, Mademoiselle," observed good, kind Mr. Belson, "if you are quite sure that neither my wife nor I can do any thing for you, I had better be going, instead of helping to fill your room when you cannot possibly be much dis-posed for entertaining company. You are very right, my dear,—quite right to open your doors, and let people see how little is to be seen; but there is no need for me to trouble you any longer. When you wish to see my wife, just send across to tell her so, and make any use you like of me. Good morning, ladies."

More visitors came in, and Mademoiselle had again to begin the ten-times-repeated tale.

"And which window was it you first looked out of, ma'am? The first story, did you say? We were told the lower——"

"It is certainly a hackney-coach, Adèle," cried

Mademoiselle, who had started from her seat in the midst of that which was being said to her ; " it is a hackney-coach with two gentlemen in it."

And without ceremony the two young ladies ran out of the room, closing the door behind them, and leaving their visitors to look wondering and wise upon each other. Miss Harvey stepped to the window in time to see the tenants of the coach alight, whispering to her sister that Mademoiselle had not absolutely denied the story of the handcuffs, after all.

Free in respect of the hands, however, and apparently light of heart, the gentleman alighted, nodding to his sisters, but not entering the house till his slow-paced companion was ready to precede him. The coach was not discharged ; the ladies did not at once re-enter the room ; and the second person was certainly not a gentleman ; but it was impossible to suppose that matters were going wrong, while M. Gaubion wore so cheerful a face. Thus decided the observers in the dining-room.

" Is it all over ? — all well over ? " whispered Mademoiselle, on meeting her brother.

" All brought to an issue which cannot fail, " he replied. " They will have my books ; and my books are the best witnesses I could bring, — eloquent, silent witnesses of my innocence."

" They do not believe you then ? "

" The Board of Customs does, I am confident ; but they cannot refuse to go to the bottom of the matter, now they have begun, and it is very well

for me that it should be so ; but I cannot stay now ; I must not keep the officer waiting——”

“ The officer !”

“ Yes ; I asked for him. Do not look so frightened ; I requested that he might come with me, that I might not be suspected of leaving some of my books behind, or destroying any papers. I did propose sending to you for the books ; but I thought you might, in your hurry, omit something.”

“ I am glad you came yourself.”

“ So am I, as it will satisfy you that the affair must end well. Now that they have brought me to the proof, I am safe.”

Mademoiselle could not deny this ; yet the thought of an officer being on the premises cast a shade over her face as she returned to her visitors.

One of the ladies proffered the consoling consideration that, if the worst came to the worst, the punishment would be nothing in comparison with what many gentlemen had undergone for treason, and such things. She supposed a fine would be all ; and it could not be very difficult for M. Gaubion to pay a fine ; and if there should be a short imprisonment added——

“ I thought I had explained, madam, that there is no danger of any kind of punishment ; there is not even a prosecution ; and, if there were, my brother has clear proof to bring forward of the falsehood of the charge. My concern is only on account of its being imagined that he

could be so false, so treacherous, as to come and seem to rely on the hospitality of a foreign nation, for the very purpose of injuring their trade. Let his acquittal be as honourable as possible,—as honourable as it will be,—still we can never forget that he has been suspected of this despicable offence against the society he lives in."

As all was now known that could be known within the limits of a decent visit, one after another of the visitors dropped away ; those who lingered in the street agreeing with those who overtook, that Mademoiselle was a very sweet creature, certainly, and probably perfectly delightful in her native society ; but that she was rather high-flown for this sober country.

Mademoiselle had need of all her high-flown thoughts to sustain her this day. Her brother did not come home to dinner, nor appear at tea-time, nor arrive before the last moment to which Adèle was permitted to sit up, in hopes of his customary evening blessing. A little while before midnight he returned, languid,—whether only in body, or likewise depressed in spirits, his sister could not at first discover. He solemnly assured her that all was going on well ; that his books had been minutely examined, and every transaction found to be regular, and every statement correct. The declaration of the amount of his stock was found to be consistent with the number of weavers whose English names stood in his books ; and the work declared to be now in their hands tallied with the unfulfilled orders which were registered. Yet all was not over ; it

remained to send round to the houses which were set down as the abodes of his weavers, in order to discover whether those weavers really lived there, and were actually employed on the work declared to be in their looms. This was to be done to-morrow, and when it should have turned out favourably for the foreigner, it was difficult to conceive of any further pretence being found for doubting his word, or persecuting him as an enemy.

Yet Mademoiselle was certain that her brother was dejected—that his confidence was impaired ; and she told him so. He admitted it, and ascribed the change in his spirits to the alteration which had taken place in the relative feelings of himself and his accusers. While it was merely that he was not esteemed by them, his consciousness of innocence was sufficient to bear him up. But he had, since morning, seen so much jealousy, heard so much cavilling, witnessed such unwillingness to relinquish each charge, and such extraordinary ingenuity in imagining methods of fraud which might possibly have been put in practice by him, that he felt he could no longer respect or esteem some among whom he had hoped to live in amity.

It was very painful, he observed, not to be esteemed by them ; but not to be permitted to esteem them was an intolerable evil. He did not know what he could do but go away, after all.

“ Wait ; be patient till the more liberal policy has had time to work,” was his sister’s advice. “ If it be true that the former system made them

subtle and jealous, the latter and better system may restore to them the attributes of that brotherhood which must some day prevail. If it is already too late for them to be thus wrought upon, there is hope from their children and successors. Let us remain to prove it."

"It is folly," he replied, "to expect that the blighting effects of a prohibitive system can be removed from the heart and mind, any more than from the fortunes, in the course of one generation, or of many generations; but if we can aid the work of amelioration by staying, let us stay, and convert into friends as many of our neighbours as we can."

The next morning was rather a warm one for the work which M. Gaubion had to do. It is warm work on a freezing winter's day to have one's good faith questioned, and to listen to cross-examinations conducted with the express object of discovering discrepancies in one's statements, and under the certainty that every mistake detected is to be accounted a lie. When to this is added the climbing the stair-cases of Spitalfields, in summer weather, the glare in the streets from long rows of burnished lattices, and the trippings and slippings on cabbage-stalks and leaves in the alleys, any degree of lassitude may be pardoned at the end of the excursion. The Frenchman had to take heed to his steps in more ways than one. He was careful not to dictate to the examiners in any way, and never to precede them in their walks and their clambering. They had with them a plan of Spitalfields, and he left it wholly to them

to discover the abodes entered in his books, and to satisfy themselves that the persons named really dwelt there. He stood passive—(whether also patient was best known to himself)—while a consultation was held in the broiling sun whether they should turn this way or that, and how they should discover the right number when there was no visible sign of it. He followed up stairs merely to see that he had fair play, and then, for the first and last time in his life, could not condescend to speak to his own weavers.

Notwithstanding lungs, stomach, and head, Mrs. Ellis was still at work, and still able, by brandishing her brush, to raise clouds as instantaneously as Jupiter himself could cleave them with a motion of his armed right hand. Her locket still shone, only somewhat more coppery than before; and her hair was decidedly grown, its front ringlets now tickling her chin as they danced in the breath of her loom.

“A beautiful piece of velvet, indeed, Mrs. Ellis! Your name is Ellis, I think.”

“Alas! yes, sir; and the worse for me that I ever knew the name; much more took it. Such a life as I had with my husband—”

“Well, we did not come to hear about your husband, but about you. You are a person of much more importance to us, Mrs. Ellis.”

The lady came out of her loom to make a more extensive curtsey than the space within its bench would allow.

“A beautiful figure that velvet has, to be sure. What house are you weaving it for?”

"Mr. Corbyn's, sir. We all weave for Mr. Corbyn."

The examiners looked at one another, and one of them was disposed to think she meant to say Culver, as there was no manufacturer of the name of Corbyn in the neighbourhood.

"Do you mean Mr. Culver or M. Gaubion, good woman?" asked an impartial examiner.

"Same's he they call Mounseer Go-be-hung," Tom called out from behind.

"What, this gentleman?" and they made way for the Frenchman to show himself. At the sight of him, Tom reddened prodigiously, and poked over his work as if his life depended on his weaving half a yard an hour.

"What are you ashamed of, all in a moment?" asked one of the visitors. "I am afraid you had some hand in the riots the other night, like many an idle boy. Come, tell me; do not you like to light a bonfire?"

"Indeed I can't say that my Tom is any thing better than a middling boy," observed Mrs. Ellis. "Would you believe it, gentlemen, he left his work a full quarter of an hour sooner than he had leave to do, the night of the riot; and when he came home, the skin was off the palm of his hand as clean as if it had been peeled, and he has never had the grace to seem sorry for it."

"Indeed, I don't know who should be sorry for such a misfortune, if he is not," observed a visitor, gravely. "Come, Tom, tell me how it happened. You had been pulling down shutters, or pulling up palings, I am afraid."

" I hadn't though," said Tom, attempting to set the treadles going, but being instantly deprived by his mother of his shuttle.

" Then I doubt you helped to carry the gibbet, and hang the effigy?"

" I didn't though," answered Tom.

" Who hurt your hand so, then? It must have been somebody in a great passion."

" No, 'twarn't; I got it done myself."

" Well, I wonder at your taste. I would always keep a whole skin, if I could."

Tom pulled his forelock respectfully, and went on with his work, his mother shaking her head, as if she thought his case desperate. Other people's leaving off speaking to him was the signal for M. Gaubion to begin.

" I think I saw you, Tom, the night of the riot." Tom looked up.

" Was it not you that cut the rope, and tried to drag the effigy away?"

Tom nodded.

" What did you do next? I was obliged to go from the window then."

" So you *war* there! I jist crinkle-crankled myself up in the rope, so that they couldn't burn you without me too."

" But they did not burn you, I hope?"

" Jist singed a bit; no more. This," pointing to his hand, " comed of a great nail in the gibbet, that gived me a good hould as long as it lasted."

" So you pulled it out."

" We split the gibbet's self 'mong us; and then

'twar all over with me, and I comed home directly then."

" Why did not you stay to see the sight, when once you found you could not help its going forward?"

" They put me in a rare passion, 'mong 'em; and I didn't want to see nought of their sights."

" What were you in a passion about? What had you to do with it?"

To this question no answer was to be got, but instead thereof an inquiry.

" For all they say, you won't think of going away for sich as they? They'll come round, when they see you don't go off in a huff."

" And if I do go, you will easily get work, Tom. You weave well now, and Mr. Culver and many others will have work to give you."

" No fear," Tom said; but he did not seem to wish M. Gaubion to go away the more for that.

" Do ask her," said one of the visitors to the Frenchman,—" you know her better than we do,—do ask her why, in times like these, she does not live in more comfort. The wonder is that she lets these looms at all in a room where a saucepan-full of cabbage-water stands in a corner, and her peppermint-bottle on the sill, and not a window open."

M. Gaubion did not see that it was any business of his; but Tom overheard the remark, and gave assurance that his mother had so little appetite that she could not eat her breakfast without her little rasher and greens; and that she was so

subject to sinking of her inside, that she was obliged to keep her peppermint-bottle beside her.

"And do you take any of it, boy?"

"Why, no, sir: my inside don't sink often till night; and then I go and garden."

"That is better than taking peppermint, depend upon it. Mrs. Ellis, it seems to me a pity that you should bring up both these young folks as weavers. If you were to make this boy something else, there would be a better chance for you all when bad times come; and meanwhile, you could let his loom for half as much as he earns."

Objections sufficient to knock down half-a-dozen such proposals were poured out on the instant, and re-urged so vehemently on the mention of bad times, that it was plain the widow did not anticipate bad times, but thought weaving the best occupation she could bring up her children to. She ended by saying, that to be pretty sure of work, at Tom's age, under such a master as M. Gaubion, was more than he could expect in any other employment; and that if there was any change, she thought *she* should have the benefit of it. Heaven only knew what she had gone through, from Tom's age till now—in her husband's time especially. She always thought, in her youth, that her's was a hard lot, so much at the loom as she was; but all that was nothing to the confinement afterwards. Her husband was of a jealous temper, God forgive him! and kept at home and within himself sadly; and he could

not bear that her acquaintance should be so much more general than his ; so that she had more trouble than enough if she moved three yards from her own door, to have a chat with a neighbour. Since she lost him, poor man ! (which would have been a great relief but for her having such a family upon her hands,) she had had to work for bread, and for any little comforts which her weak health made necessary ; and now, if anybody was to have rest, or any advantage, it should be herself, and not Tom, who was but just——

“ But would you apprentice yourself to a gardener, or to learn any new business ? ” inquired M. Gaubion. “ That was what I contemplated for Tom. If he could weave like you,—if this velvet were his work,—I should not propose the change.”

The widow laughed at the idea of her boy weaving as well as herself, but would not yet hear of any change. The examiners found that it was time to make a change in the scene of their inquiries ; and declaring themselves satisfied that Mrs. Ellis was Mrs. Ellis, and that she lived and wove as declared, they left poor Tom to throw his shuttle amidst reveries of ranunculus, geranium, tulip, and hyacinth.

The names of Dickens and Rogers were down on the list ; and it was therefore necessary to go to Cooper’s, where their looms stood.

There was not a more cheerful house in all Spitalfields than Cooper’s. Short had resumed his ancient song, and sat, with his grizzled hair

hanging about his round shoulders, cheerily weaving his fiftieth last piece. Dickens and Rogers were no less busy, and, consequently, equally amiable. No dispute ever arose within these four walls, but when the comparative merits of the masters, English and French, were in question ; or when, by chance, any old-world custom was brought into contrast with any new. On such occasions, Mrs. Cooper's good-humour presently charmed away strife ; and she contrived, ultimately, to persuade each disputant to be content with his own opinion, as he was with his own species of work. Let him who weaves gros-de-Naples feel himself enlightened in his advocacy of what is modern ; and let him who weaves velvet plume himself on his fidelity to what is ancient. Such was her philosophy, communicated in a timely smile, and a gentle word let drop here and there. Ichabod was an admirable auxiliary in restoring peace when his grown-up companions were ruffled. He could at any time be made to imitate the loom's smack and tick, or to look into Rogers's pocket to see what he could find there ; or to stroke old Short's cheek, and rock upon his shoulders, regardless of the dusty coat-collar ; or to stick a daisy into Dickens's button-hole ; after any one of which feats he was blessed, and winked at behind his back, as the rarest child that ever was seen. If, on hot days, a pint of beer was wished for, Ichabod could bring it without spilling, provided it was in a quart pot. Surrounded by both arms, and tightly squeezed against his breast, it arrived safe, Mrs .

Cooper removing every stick and straw out of her child's path, that he might get credit and confidence, instead of disgrace and a panic. Cooper, meanwhile, worked away for his wife and boy, trusting to go on to do so, notwithstanding any temporary mischief caused by the speculations of throwsters, and when the discordant prophecies of those about him should have issued in acquiescence in the lasting benefits of an unrestricted commerce.

The examiners were even more tempted to forget their immediate object here than at Mrs. Ellis's. One walked straight up to the clear, bright window, to look out upon the patch of garden-ground behind ; while the other took notice of a curious foreign clock (once belonging to Cooper's ancestors), which had been preserved as family property through all chances and changes of fortune. It was true that now either of the almost equally short hands might point as it happened, to six or twelve ; that the machine, like other machines, sometimes went to sleep at night, and was now and then drowsy in the day ; but the case was inlaid as curiously as ever, and the chimes set all the lively children who might be within hearing chiming, morning, noon, and night. Whatever might be Ichabod's destined education in other respects, he was sure to know enough of German text to read the name of the maker of this clock, and sufficient geography to be able to tell whereabouts on the earth's surface lay the Flemish town where it received its wondrous being.

" You should see my husband's other garden, out of doors, sir," said Mrs. Cooper. " You seem to like this ; but it is nothing to the one out of doors. I do not mean for size, but for the beauty of the flowers."

" Ay," observed Short, " he pays ten shillings a year for it ; and he does not make half so much out of it as used to be made in my young days."

" I get health and wholesome amusement out of it ; and that is enough when one cannot get more. You see, gentlemen, ours is a bad occupation for the health and the nerves. You may see a sort of scared look, they say, that we weavers have, and bent backs, by the time we come to middle age ; and even my hands shake so sometimes, at the end of a long day's work, that I should soon begin to feel myself growing old, if I did not turn out to breathe a little, and occupy myself in something pleasant. It is well worth while making a little less money than one might do, and to keep one's health."

" Certainly ; if you are lucky enough to be able to afford it."

" Why, sir, our people here do mostly contrive to afford some fancy or another ; either a garden like mine, or birds, or flute-playing, or drawing. Drawing for the most part requires a steadier hand than a weaver has ; but we hear many a flute far and near in the summer evenings. There are few fancies that may not be found here and there among us : though there are not many men that, having but one child and a managing wife, are so free to afford them as I am."

"The way to afford them is to make them pay," observed old Short. "Folks understood that matter in my time. A root that Cooper here sells for eighteen-pence, used to bring five guineas. Those were the times to grow flowers in."

"I had rather see a hundred roots of any beautiful tulip in a hundred gardens," observed M. Gaubion, "that a hundred owners might enjoy its beauty, than have the single root from which the hundred sprang, even though it might make me envied by all my neighbours, and moreover be worth five or fifty guineas."

"So had I, sir," said Cooper: "for the same reason that I had rather see any useful or pretty article of manufacture growing cheap, and spreading over the world, than have it remain scarce, that I and a few others might have the sale of it to ourselves. My flowers answer their purpose better in giving pleasure to me and mine, than in being wondered at and snatched up for their rarity; and it is the same with things that are wrought by the hand of man. They must be scarce at the beginning; but that scarcity is a necessary fault, not a virtue, as far as their usefulness is concerned. But, as to making them more scarce than they need be, I would not be the man that had to answer for it!"

"Then you deserve the due and true reward of the liberal,—to have plenty while giving others plenty. I see you work for one master, and these neighbours of yours for another. You seem all to be busy enough."

"Yes, sir. Thank God! M. Gaubion has had enough for his people to do; and we,—that is, I,"—nodding with a significant smile towards Short,—"cannot but improve by seeing what is all the same as French work going on under one's eyes. Our fabrics, sir, are quite another thing already to what they were three years ago."

There was indeed a manifest difference between Short's piece (which might be taken as a specimen of what the English fabric had been five years before) and Cooper's, whose work was little, if at all, inferior to that which M. Gaubion's trained men were achieving with his improved apparatus.—That gentleman took no part while the comparison was being made; and when looked for, as his companions were about to leave the room, was found in a corner with Ichabod, cooking dinner in the kitchen of a baby-house which was the little lad's favourite toy. Twice had the jack been wound up, nine times had the goose revolved, and again and again had the lady inhabitant been brought down from her toilet to the kitchen fire, and led from the kitchen to her jointed table, before Ichabod would leave hold of M. Gaubion's right-hand cuff, and allow him to go about other business than his gallant cookery.

"Your little son has his fancy as well as you," the gentleman observed with a smile. "Though far from the age of being worn and weary, Ichabod has his fancy;—the first fancy, I hope, of many."

"It is as much Mr. Short's fancy as Ichabod's, or more," replied Mrs. Cooper, "Mr.

Short has been good enough to make the greater part of this toy with his own hands. These little chairs are cut with his own knife; and the looking-glass,—do look, sir, how nicely so small a bit of glass is framed,—this looking-glass is of his making; and so little time as he has now too!"

Short let his shuttle rest while he watched complacently how the grave men of business gathered round his baby-house, to admire one and another of its toys. He did not hear Cooper whisper that Mr. Short seemed to have more time now for the child than when he used to sit over the fire all day, moping because he had nothing to do. Now, it was a regular thing, on a Sunday morning, for the old man to take Ichabod on his knee, and turn over the big bible, that was brought down out of the cupboard, looking at the pictures, and at Short's great-grandfather's handwriting. And there was scarcely an evening that he was not about one little kind-hearted job or another, while the child was asleep, little thinking what treats were preparing for him.

"Well! long may we all be able to afford to keep a fancy!" said one of the visitors. "That is, if the fancy is of a better kind than that of accusing this gentleman here, because he is a foreigner, of practices which it is clear to me he never dreamed of."

All present joined in the wish, and Rogers and Dickens desired no more than to be as free from care, if they lived to old age, as Short was now. He was sure, from his claim of long service, of

work from a good master, as long as any work was to be had ; and there was little doubt of this whenever the consequences of the first disorder, inevitable on the occasion of a change of system, should be surmounted, and speculation subside into its natural channels. This would soon happen now, and Short need not, they hoped, say any more that he had woven his last piece, till he should find his hand refuse to throw the shuttle, or his feet grow stiff upon the treadles.

M. Gaubion had a bow from the entire audience as he left the room, Short himself being propitiated by his act of winding up the jack.

Others of the gentleman's foes were not so easily won. He very simply supposed, and led his sisters to suppose, that all was well over when the haunts of his weavers had been examined, and his statements found correct. No such thing. Some one was wise enough to discern that this entire method of examination and verification might be a concerted plot ;—concerted between the Treasury and the Frenchman.

What was to be done next ?

Some proof must be afforded that M. Gaubion had no French goods in his possession.

“ A proof easily afforded,” replied he. “ Go to my warehouse ; turn over every piece of silk it contains ; and with the first article of foreign manufacture which you can thence produce, I will restore to you my esteem, and forfeit yours.”

One, and another, and another, declined the commission, on the plea of want of confidence in their own judgment and experience ; though

it was scarcely three years since any notable little girl of ten years old could tell a French from an English silk by a mere glance or touch. This new-born modesty was not allowed to be an obstacle to the experiment. M. Gaubion requested that the most acute detector of foreign fabrics on the Customs establishment should precede him to his warehouse, and try what could be found there. As it was impossible to devise a more searching trial of the foreigner's good faith than he had himself proposed, his plan was agreed upon.

Day after day, the inquiry was prosecuted ; and M. Gaubion allowed the free range of his warehouse to all the parties concerned, except himself. He began to fancy, naturally enough, that he had mistaken his way on leaving home, and got set down in some country where the Inquisition still thrives, commerce being its subject instead of religion ; silks its object instead of creeds ; the fabrics of human hands instead of those of human heads. He could very confidently identify the working spirit.

He opposed an invincible patience to the workings of this spirit ; and read with a calm eye the Report of the Custom House agent that thirty-seven pieces had been selected from among many hundred as undoubtedly French ; and stood by with an unmoved countenance to witness their seizure ; and followed with a steady step to the dépôt, albeit greeted with insults at every turn, in the neighbourhood where he was known. Unassisted even by his own clerks, that no room

might be afforded for a further charge of collusion, he made out from the books to which access was granted on his petition, a list of the weavers of these thirty-seven pieces ; issued summonses to them, and went home to await the appearance of those who had to travel from Macclesfield to swear to their own work. His sisters had no more bitter jokes about handcuffs to amuse him with : but it was pretty evident to them, (though their neighbours were not so plain-spoken to the ladies as to their servants,) that it was thought not to look well that the matter was so long in hand ; and that that which had been declared so easy of proof should be so tardily acknowledged. Mademoiselle was also quite of the opinion that all this did not look well. For whom it looked ill was another question.

CHAPTER VII.

PROSPECTIVE BROTHERHOOD.

WHEN the Macclesfield weavers arrived to swear to their handiwork, it was remarked with some surprise that they did not appear to bear the same similitude to their Spitalfields' brethren as one race of weavers usually bears to another. Several of them measured more than five feet five ; and though some were pale and thin, they did not show the peculiar conformation of shoulders and of face which marks the weaving son and

grandson of a weaver. The simple reason of this was, that most of these men had but lately taken to the craft ; only in consequence of the magnificent promises held out, and the large speculations entered into, on the determination of parliament to repeal the restrictions of former years. When many thousands of apprentices were advertised for, and a multitude of new hands quarrelled for by ambitious capitalists, the temptation was great to quit employments which were poorly paid, for the sake of the wages which the masters vied with each other in offering. It happened, of course, that many, both of masters and men, were disappointed. The inundation of smuggled silks, caused by the prohibition of pieces of a certain length, prepared for the opened market, was a serious misfortune to the masters ; and the immediate extension of sale, in consequence of the greatness of the supply, did not equal their expectations. As their stocks accumulated, some of their men were compelled to betake themselves to other occupations, or to wait for a clearance of the market, complaining, meanwhile, the foolish of the new measures by which a competition was established with the French, the wise of the miscalculations by which the good effects of the new measures had been for a time obscured. M. Gaubion's men alone had no cause for lamentation. The superiority of his goods ensured his immediate prosperity on his settling in England ; and of his many workmen, none went back disappointed to an inferior kind of labour, or sat listless, waiting for better times.

These men had something cheerful to say even of those of their brethren whose hopes had been disappointed as to the silk manufacture. It happened "luckily," as they said,—"of course," as M. Gaubion and Mr. Culver agreed,—that there was an increased demand for labour in some other businesses, in exact proportion as French silks sold in our markets. This was natural enough, as the French must have something in return for their goods; and they would of course take those articles which we can produce better than they. It was not the less a happy thing, however, for the poor man, because it was a matter of course, that if one of his sons had to wait for the clearing of the silk market, another who was a cutler, and a third who was a cotton spinner, were in a state of increased prosperity. The fact was, that the distress of the weavers had been greater in 1816 than at any time since, while it was occasioned by causes much more likely to be lasting in their operation, and was in no degree compensated by increased briskness in other departments of British manufacture. The sum and substance of the news from Macclesfield was that some scores of slightly-built cottages were certainly tumbling into ruins, but that many dozens were inhabited which had not been in existence five years before;—that there had undoubtedly been a transference of some hundreds of apprentices from the various branches of the silk manufacture to other departments of labour, but that a much greater number had been added to the silk throwing and weaving population;—

and that, if many were still waiting for employment, they were not so many by half as those who had been taken on by other classes of masters.

It could not be otherwise, an officer of the Customs declared, as the imports of raw and thrown silk were already nearly double what they had been in the busiest year under the old system, and as our exports of manufactured silks had increased 300 per cent. since the trade had been thrown open.

"You left your own country just at the right time, sir," observed another officer to M. Gau-bion. "The French exports have been declining,—not so fast as ours have risen,—but enough to show that the English need not fear competition with their foreign neighbours."

"But who could have guessed," asked the first, "how amazingly the manufacture would improve in this short time? The heavier sort of fabrics have improved more in three years than in any quarter of a century before. As to gauzes, and ribbons, and other light kinds of goods, the French still surpass us there, and will do so, probably, for a long time to come; but in the substantial and more important fabrics of our looms, we can undersell our neighbours in many coun-tries abroad."

"For which we are partly indebted to this gentle-man, whom some of you have taken upon you to persecute," observed a plain-spoken Maccles-field man. "Poor man as I am, I had rather be myself, working under him, than them that

have been working against him. And how it came into their heads to suspect him is more than I can guess. Come, gentlemen, I am ready to swear to my piece. That's the piece I wove : I can swear to it, by certain marks, as confidently as my wife could to our eldest by the mole on his arm."

One of the Customs officers could give an account of one circumstance which had aggravated the suspicions against M. Gaubion. A mysterious-looking package had arrived at the Custom-house, addressed to Mademoiselle, and declared to contain a mummy for her museum. This package had been detained for some time, on pretence of its being difficult to assign the duties on an article which it did not appear had been in the contemplation of the framers of the Customs regulations at the period of their origin. A mummy could scarcely be specified as raw produce ; and if considered as a manufactured article, it would be difficult to find a parallel by which to judge of the rate of duty for which it was liable. Under this pretence, the package had been detained ; but there were suspicions that it enclosed some other stuffing than the linen swathing-bands of Egyptian production, and it was reserved for examination, in case of the whole train of evidence against the gentleman miscarrying. The more it was examined, the more the package looked as if it must conceal prohibited goods in some of its recesses ; but the proof was kept for a grand explosion, as the catastrophe of poor M. Gaubion's trials. The gentlemen of the Custom-house had

begun now to think that there might be possibly no more dishonesty in this package than in those of M. Gaubion's proceedings which had been already investigated; and the box had therefore been opened and examined this morning, when they found the mummy, the whole mummy, (which was well for Mademoiselle's museum,) and nothing but the mummy, (which was equally well on her brother's account.)

Nothing now remained but to verify the authorship of the thirty-seven pieces. Three men swore to two each as their own; and every one of the others was claimed by a maker. These thirty-seven pieces of unquestionable French goods were all woven in Macclesfield and Spitalfields!

Culver examined the men, and the marks they pointed out, and did not glance towards the Frenchman while the investigation was going on. Just so was it with the persevering accusers of the stranger. The difference between them and Mr. Culver was, that neither did they look in M. Gaubion's face finally, but slunk away, after the wont of false accusers; while Mr. Culver went up to the acquitted to say—

“ I never gave worse advice, sir, than when I recommended you to keep quiet, and let matters take their course. Innocent as you are proved to have been all this time, I hope you would have disregarded my advice, if our riotous neighbours had not compelled you to throw it behind you. I thought I was giving you the most friendly counsel, sir; for, to say the truth, I thought,—without having a bad opinion of you, either,—that you

had most probably been involved as these gentlemen said you were."

"Without having a bad opinion of me! How could that be?"

"Why, sir, when one considers how long our prohibitive laws have been evaded by all classes of people in turn,—so that the bad were not held to be the worse for such practices, and they were considered no stain upon the good,—it seemed natural enough that, if your interest tempted you particularly, you should continue the contraband trade when other people were thinking to have done with it."

"In declaring that I might violate public loyalty and private faith in one set of circumstances, without being a bad man," said M. Gau-bion, "it seems to me that you pass the severest of censures on the power which framed those circumstances."

"I have no objection, sir, to having my words considered in that light. The business of governments is to guard the freedom of commerce, and not to interfere with it. If they choose to show partiality, and to meddle with affairs which they cannot properly control, they become answerable for the sin of disobedience which is sure to arise, and for all the mischiefs that follow in its train. If, moreover, governments take up any wrong notion,—such as that which has caused us a world of woe,—that the benefits of commerce arise from what is exported rather than from what is imported,—if such a notion is taken up, and obstinately acted upon, long after the bulk of the

people know better, the ruling powers are responsible for all the consequences that visit themselves and the subjects whom they have afflicted, either by commercial misfortunes or by legal punishments."

" Then you consider your ancient governments (less liberal and enlightened than the present) answerable alike for my guilt, if I had smuggled, and for my troubles under the suspicion of having smuggled ?"

" Just so ; and for more within my little circle of observation than I should like to have to bear my share of."

" For the late prosperity of Breme and his brother,—prosperity of which the neighbours were jealous because it arose from amidst the destitution of a host of native weavers ?" :

" I could soon bring myself to bear the thought of that, seeing that Breme is more prosperous still, now that there is not destitution among his neighbours. The Brighton concern may have gone down in some degree ; but the London one has flourished in greater proportion. I could much sooner forgive myself for Breme's former prosperity, let it come whence it might, than for breaking the heart of a fine fellow,—a friend of Breme's,—on the coast. I mention him because he is a specimen of a large class who were induced by the temptations of a flourishing contraband trade to quit their proper business, and set their hearts upon a cast which must disappoint them, sooner or later. Poor Pim was made for as hale and cheerful an old

age as man need have: but he and his neighbours flourished too much under a bad system, and now they flourish too little under a better; and there sits the poor man, grey before his time, moping and moaning by his fireside, while his daughter, who should have gone on to be the best of housekeepers to a father she looked up to, is now striving to keep the house in another sense, and toiling in vain to preserve the appearances on which their scanty bread depends. Pim would never have been tempted to be anything but what he was fit for, if he had not unhappily fallen under an artificial system. Poor fellow! I hoped there had been comfort in store for him in the shape of a companion to gossip with. Our poor nurse——”

“ My ancient enemy,” observed M. Gaubion, smiling. “ I fear she will hardly be glad to hear the news of me that you will carry home. To your daughters, at least, I trust it will be welcome.”

“ There is little intelligence that will be welcome to them to-day, even though it concerns yourself. They are mourning their old friend, who died this morning.”

“ What, nurse! I shall be more grieved than ever that I caused her so much pain as I believe I did, by making myself, as far I could, an Englishman. But I could not help it. She left us no message of peace, I fear.”

“ Not exactly a message, for she left no messages except one for my son, and one for Rebecca Pim; but I heard her speaking more

pleasantly of your family yesterday than I should have expected. She kept her own opinions to the last ; but she seemed to grow tired of the enmities which sprang from them. She felt kindly towards everybody latterly, as far as I know, except Mrs. Mudge's nurse-maid. Why, I can tell you no more of Mrs. Mudge's nurse-maid (nor could poor nurse herself, I fancy) than that she wears, and has for some time worn, a silk gown. It was this which occasioned the message to my son ; viz. that, as our firm is now prospering, she hoped we might do very well without tempting people to wear silks who never wore them before ; and that, dying, she could not countenance what she had been so little used to, even if it was to benefit her master's trade and family. The message to Rebecca Pim related to those of Rebecca's neighbours who had been kind to nurse's poor son."

" Ah ! I remember your daughters told my sisters that sad story. Can we be of any service to your family ? Shall I send Adèle, or——"

" My dear sir ! why do you stand here, letting me talk about a hundred things, while your ladies are in suspense about your affair ? I deserve——"

" Not so. I have sent to relieve them, and shall now follow. Tell me if I can serve you."

" Yes, if you can make your sisters forgive the part I have acted towards you. For those who have done worse, I will offer no defence."

" None is needed beyond that which is before our eyes in the struggles of an expiring system of

monopoly. But a few days ago, I thought I could hardly forgive my opponents ; but now I am disposed to wait and see the effects of a natural co-operation of interests. Let your Coopers have hearts open for 'fancies,' and a purse wherewith to indulge them ;—let your old friend Short leave an unfinished piece upon his loom when his hour shall come ;—let your daughters purchase French or English dresses as they list ;—let our neighbours and ourselves be free to sell where we find customers most eager to buy ;—let the government trust us to prosper after our own manner,—and there will be no antipathies mixed up with our bargains ; no loss of time and temper in suspiciously watching one another's proceedings ; no mutual injury in apprehension, any more than in reality."

" Do you really expect to see the day when all will go so smoothly with us ?"

" That the day will fully come I believe, because I already see the dawn. But a few hours ago it seemed to me all clouded, and I fretfully declared I would not abide the uncertainty."

" And now ? You cannot now think of leaving us,—to our everlasting shame ? You will allow us to repair our disgrace ?"

" We will repent our mutual offences ;—I my precipitancy, and you your misapprehension. Yes ; I will stay, and in our brotherhood as individuals discern the future brotherhood of our respective nations.

Summary of Principles illustrated in this and the preceding Volume.

THE countries of the world differ in their facilities for producing the comforts and luxuries of life.

The inhabitants of the world agree in wanting or desiring all the comforts and luxuries which the world produces.

These wants and desires can be in no degree gratified but by means of mutual exchanges. They can be fully satisfied only by means of absolutely universal and free exchanges.

By universal and free exchange,—that is, by each person being permitted to exchange what he wants least for what he wants most,—an absolutely perfect system of economy of resources is established; the whole world being included in the arrangement.

The present want of agreement in the whole world to adopt this system does not invalidate its principle when applied to a single nation. It must ever be the interest of a nation to exchange what it wants little at home for what it wants more from abroad. If denied what it wants most, it will be wise to take what is next best; and so on, as long as anything is left which is produced better abroad than at home.

In the above case, the blame of the deprivation rests with the prohibiting power; but the suffering affects both the trading nations,—the one being prevented getting what it wants most—the other being prevented parting with what it wants least.

As the general interest of each nation requires that there should be perfect liberty in the exchange of commodities, any restriction on such liberty, for the sake of benefiting any particular class or classes, is a sacrifice of a larger interest to a smaller,—that is, a sin in government.

This sin is committed when,—

First,—Any protection is granted powerful enough to

tempt to evasion, producing disloyalty, fraud, and jealousy : when,
 Secondly,—Capital is unproductively consumed in the maintenance of an apparatus of restriction : when,
 Thirdly,—Capital is unproductively bestowed in enabling those who produce at home dearer than foreigners to sell abroad as cheap as foreigners,—that is, in bounties on exportation : and when,
 Fourthly,—Capital is diverted from its natural course to be employed in producing at home that which is expensive and inferior, instead of in preparing that which will purchase the same article cheap and superior abroad,—that is, when restrictions are imposed on importation.

But though the general interest is sacrificed, no particular interest is permanently benefited, by special protections ; since

Restrictive regulations in favour of the few are violated, when such violation is the interest of the many ; and

Every diminution of the consumer's fund causes a loss of custom to the producer. Again,

The absence of competition and deprivation of custom combine to make his article inferior and dear ; which inferiority and dearness cause his trade still further to decline.

Such are the evils which attend the protection of a class of producers who cannot compete with foreign producers of the same article.

If home producers can compete with foreign producers, they need no protection, as, *cæteris paribus*, buying at hand is preferable to buying at a distance.

Free competition cannot fail to benefit all parties :—

Consumers, by securing the greatest practicable improvement and cheapness of the article ;

Producers, by the consequent perpetual extension of demand ;—and

Society at large, by determining capital to its natural channels.

W. CLOWNS, Stamford-street.

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.



No. XIX.

SOWERS NOT REAPERS.

A Tale.

By HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON:
CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1833.

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PREFACE.

FROM the moment of beginning my work, one of my most anxious endeavours has been to keep myself out of the sight of my readers ;—not from any affectation of reserve, but because, in this case, there is no necessary connexion between the author of the work and the matter discussed in it. Occasions have arisen, however, to induce me to speak in the first person, in a preface ; and I now do so again on account of certain questions which have been publicly as well as privately treated, respecting the proper direction of the popular influence which is attributed to me, and which it would be equally weak and hypocritical in me to disclaim.

What I wish to explain is,—briefly,—that I take my stand upon SCIENCE. Whether the truths attempted to be illustrated by me on this ground be Tory, Whig, or Radical, is a question to

be determined, if they so please, by Tories, Whigs, and Radicals, and not (at least at present) by me. It comes within the scope of my object to illustrate certain principles of Social Morals, as well as of Political Economy; but it is altogether foreign to my purpose to determine by what political party those principles are the most satisfactorily recognized. I may have,—I have,—a decided opinion on this point; but, as it has nothing to do with my work, I must protest against all attempts on the part of those who speak of me as an author to render me distrusted by any one political party, or to identify me with any other.

All have their mission. It is the mission of some to lead or support a party;—a mission as honourable as it is necessary. It is the mission of others to ascertain or to teach truth which bears no relation to party; and to fulfil it requires the free use of materials and facilities afforded by any in whose possession they may happen to be. This last is my office,—imposed on me by the very act of accepting my first services. Its discharge requires perfect liberty of action and of speech;—freedom alike from anger at the vituperation and

ridicule of one party,—from distrust of the courtesies of a second,—and from subservience to the dictation of a third. Such freedom I enjoy, and am resolved to maintain. The sciences on which I touch, whether in the one series or the other on which I am occupied, bear no relation to party. The People, for whom I write, are of no party,—I, therefore, as a writer, am of no party. To what party I might be proved to belong by inference from the truths I illustrate, I leave to be decided by those who may think it worth their while.

If this explanation should expose me to the charge of self-importance, let it in justice be remembered that it was not I who originated the question respecting the proper direction of my influence, or invited any interference therein. No such direction is attempted by myself. As I think, so I speak ; leaving what I say to find its way to the hearts and minds which have a congeniality with my own. Whenever I begin to modify the expression of what I think from a regard to one class of minds rather than another, I shall probably be thankful for assistance in determining the direction of an influence which will have lost half its vitality in losing its freedom.

Meantime, while declining all control in the use of such power as I have, I will most humbly accept aid from any quarter in the improvement of its character. With its extent and mode of operation I am and shall be satisfied, because these are not included in my responsibilities. With its quality I hope never to be satisfied; as the time ought never to arrive when it will not be inferior to my aspirations.

H. M.

SOWERS NOT REAPERS.

CHAPTER I.

MIDSUMMER MOONLIGHT.

THE nights of a certain summer of the present century would scarcely have been known for nights by those sober people who shut themselves in as it grows dark, and look out in the morning, perceiving only that the sun is come again. During the nights we speak of, repose did not descend with the twilight upon the black moors of Yorkshire, and the moon looked down upon something more glittering than the reflection of her own face in the tarns of Ingleborough, or in the reaches of the Wharf and the Don. Some of the polished and sharpened ware of Sheffield was exposed to the night dews in the fields, and passed from the hands of those who tempered to the possession of those who were to wield it.

Others were also abroad, with the view of relieving their hardships instead of seeking to avenge them. The dwellers on high grounds were so far worse off than the inhabitants of the valleys, that they could not quench their thirst, and lose in sleep their weariness and their ap-

prehensions of hunger. During the day, there was drought within, and the images of drought without ;—hay dried before it was mown ; cattle with their tongues hanging out, panting in the parched meadows ; horses lashing madly at the clouds of flies that descended upon them as they stooped to the slimy pools which had still some moisture in them ; wells with cracked buckets and dangling ropes ; and ditches where there was an equally small probability that children would find weeds and be drowned in the search. During the night, when some of these spectacles were hidden, it was necessary to take the chance of preventing a repetition of them on the following day ; and those who had cattle growing lean, children growing fretful, and no remaining patience with a dry well, bore with the weariness of night-watching in the hope of relieving the more urgent evil of thirst.

On the night when the midsummer full moon gradually emerged from the partial eclipse caused by the smokes of Sheffield, and shone full on the hill-sides to the west, two women were sitting near a spring which had rarely, till lately, failed to bless the stony region in which it was wont to flow. They came to watch for any gush or drip which might betoken the fall of showers somewhere among the hills ; and patient would their watch have appeared to an observer. The one sat on the stone fence which separated the road from a field of drooping oats, and never moved, except to cast a frightened look around her when an unseasonable bleat proceeded from the rest-

less ewes on the moor, or the distant foundry clock was heard to strike. Her companion sat, also in silence, on the edge of the dry cistern where her pitcher rested, and kept her eyes fixed on the fitful lights of the foundry from whose neighbourhood she had come.

"I have been thinking, Mary," said Mrs. Kay, leaving her seat on the wall, and speaking in a low voice to her sister-in-law,—"I have been thinking that my husband may, perhaps, come round for us when his hours are up at the foundry, instead of going straight home. I wish he may; for I declare I don't like being out in this way, all by ourselves."

Mary made no answer.

"It is all so still and unnatural here. There's the foundry at work, to be sure; but to see the tilting-mill standing, all black and quiet, is what I never met with before. We may see it for some time to come, though; for there seems little chance of a sufficient fall to touch the wheel at present. Do you think there is, Mary?"

Mary shook her head; and Mrs. Kay, having examined the spring with eye and ear, stole back to her former seat.

After looking into the field behind her for some time, she came again to say,—

"My husband talks about the crops, and the harvest being at hand, and so on; but I do not see what sort of a harvest it is to be, unless we have rain directly. What a poor-looking oat-field that is behind the wall! and there are none

any better on these high grounds, as far as I can see."

"There would be some chance for the low grounds, if the springs would flow," answered Mary.

"Why, yes. My husband was telling me that there is a corner left of one of Anderson's meadows down below, where the grass is as fresh and sweet as if there had been forty-eight hours' rain. It was but a corner; but there was one of the little Andersons, and his sister, raking up the grass after the mower, and piling their garden barrow with it, to give to their white pony. Even Anderson's beasts have been foddered, as if it was winter, for this fortnight past."

Mary nodded, and her sister proceeded.

"I wonder how many more improvements of Anderson's we shall see after this next bad harvest; for bad it must be now. It seems to me that the less his land yields, the more he lays out upon it."

"The less it yields, the more he wants, I suppose."

"Yes; but it is an accident its yielding so ill for three years together; and where he gets the money, I don't know, except that bread has been dear enough of late to pay for any thing."

"That's it, to be sure," said Mary.

"Dear enough for any thing," repeated Mrs. Kay. "When I used to have my fill of meat every day, I little thought that the bread I ate with it would grow scarce among us. No rise

of wages, such as the masters make such a complaint of, can stand against it."

Mary shook her head, and there was a long pause.

"I'll tell you what, Mary," resumed the chief speaker, after a time, "there would be much more pleasure in talking with you, if you would talk a little yourself. It sets one down so not to know whether you are listening to what one says."

"I always listen when I am spoken to," replied Mary; "but people are not all made talkers alike."

"Why, no, that they certainly are not. My husband laughs, and says that a pretty dull time you and Chatham must have of it, when you are out walking on Sundays. You will both get all you want to say in a week said in five minutes. Well, I don't wonder at your not answering that; but you will not be offended at a joke from your own brother; and you know he does not think the worse of Chatham for keeping his thoughts to himself, and—Mercy! what did I see over yonder!"

And in her hurry Mrs. Kay pushed the pitcher, which Mary caught before it went rattling down among the stones. She sat very quietly, watching the motions of a number of men who were crossing a gate from one field to another at some distance, and who seemed to be making for the road.

"Mary! Mary! what shall we do if they come here?" asked the trembling Mrs. Kay.

Mary rose and took up her pitcher, observing that they might sit safe enough in the shadow of Warden's mill, just to the left; and then they might have another chance for the spring as they came by in their way home. Mrs. Kay could scarcely be persuaded that going home would be perfectly safe as soon as it was daylight, and that the men who had evidently been out at drill would be dispersed by dawn.

The women crept along, under the shadow of the wall, and then quickly crossed the broad strip of moonlight which lay between them and the mill. Before they reached the steps, which happened to be on the shadowy side, Mrs. Kay was nearly unable to walk, and her terrors were not lessened by the apparition of a person standing on the first stage, and looking down on them from the top of the long flight of steps.

"Sit still," said Mary, beginning to ascend, till she saw that Warden, the miller, was coming down to inquire their business. She then briefly explained what brought them upon his property.

"So you are looking for water," he replied, "and I am looking for wind. For three weeks there has not been a breath, and not a steady breeze since long before that. The bakers are calling out upon us so as to keep us out of our beds, watching for any rack in the sky that may betoken a coming wind."

"And have you ever seen, sir, such a sight as sent us here?" inquired the trembling Mrs. Kay.

"Such a sight as there is in the fields there?"

"What, the nightly drill? O yes, many a

night, though they may not be aware who has been overlooking them. They have never come near enough on light nights for me to pick them out by their faces, so that there is no occasion for me to take any notice ; but I mark how they get on in shouldering their pikes and learning to obey orders. Here, as I stand by the fan-wheel, I hear the word of command quite plain through the still air ; and once they came upon this very slope. It was too dark a night for them to see me ; but I heard them stumble against the very steps you are sitting on, Mrs. Kay."

" How long do you suppose it is to last, Mr. Warden ? "

" Till prices fall, or the people have burned a mill or two, perhaps. 'Tis a happy thing for you and yours, Mrs. Kay, that Oliver's foundry does not come under the ban. There it blazes away, night and day, and I hear no curses upon it, like what are visited upon the mills. It is well for you and yours that Kay has to ladle molten metal instead of having to manage machinery. I hope he is well, Mrs. Kay ?"

Mrs. Kay did not answer, and was found to be in no condition for dialogue. Fear and fatigue had overpowered her, and she could only lean, faint and sobbing, against the rail.

" She is not strong," observed Mary. " Do you happen to have any thing in the mill to revive her ? My pitcher is empty."

Warden fanned her with his hat, having no other means of refreshment in his power ; and he carried on the conversation with Mary while

doing so, that the poor woman might have time to recover herself. It was not merely machinery that was the object of the trained bands, he observed. In many parts they had pulled down corn stores; and it was rumoured that Kirkland's granaries were threatened by the very people who were now near them. If they really entertained the idea that it was a public injury to have a stock of corn laid by while the price was high, it was no wonder that they were angry with Kirkland, as well as with some people that had much more credit, without having done and suffered so much to get it. He should like to know what the country was to do without such men as Kirkland, when there had been three bad harvests following one another?

"Your mill would stand idle if there was not corn brought from here or there," observed Mary. "But are those people that we saw bound for Kirkland's granaries? I should be sorry to think that they were about any mischief."

"They could be about little but mischief at this time of night, and with arms too; but it is full late, I fancy, to be going so far. It is said my father-in-law's threshing-machine is doomed."

"And what does he say to that?"

"O, he swears at the people because they can't be contented when he is. But, to my mind, it would not be so great a hardship this year as another, seeing how little corn there will be to thresh. Not that I approve such doings in any way; but when people are so badly off with the

high price of provisions, and the uncertainty of peace, what can you expect?"

" You talked of noting faces ; are there any of our people now in yonder fields, do you suppose ?"

" Do you mean Sheffield people, or people of your village ?"

" Why, either."

" There are undoubtedly many from about Stockport, and out of Leicestershire, who go the round to stir up discontent, and teach the drill. But it is said there are a good many neighbours of ours among them too. What is more likely than that those who have not had their fill in the day should turn out at night to something that may amuse them better than lying awake, or dreaming of cheap bread ? This is just what you have been doing, you see ; and what Mrs. Kay had better have let alone, it seems. Come, Mrs. Kay, how are you now ? Able to walk, do you think ?"

Quite able now to walk, and to ask a hundred questions on the way about the cause of the terror which had shaken her, and the probable duration of the hardship which had reduced her ; on neither of which matters was much satisfaction to be gained from the miller.

The spring was still dry, but Mary chose to watch till the children came to take her place in the morning. The miller took charge of Mrs. Kay till she was fairly within the light of the foundry fires, and then struck across the fields

homewards, hoping that his mill would not again be the refuge of frightened women while he was on the spot.

Mary's watch was vain, and the more wearisome from her occasional fancy that it would not prove vain. More than once she was persuaded that she heard the trickling of water while listening intently after the moon had gone down ; and when she fell asleep for a few moments, her thoughts were full of the hardship of having only one pitcher to fill when the water was overflowing every place. Not the less for this did she carry home this very pitcher, swinging empty at arm's length, when the village was up and awake, and the sun beating down hot upon the slippery turf, and glaring, reflected from the stone fences, upon the dusty road.

At the door she met a neighbour, Mrs. Skipper, the baker of the village, who supplied a use for the pitcher.

“ Well, Mary Kay, and what's the news with you ?”

“ Nothing particular, Mrs. Skipper. Are you come to tell us again that bread is risen ?”

“ Why, that I am, I'm sorry to say ; and I wish you would change looks with me, Mary, and then people would not taunt me as they do, when I say that bread has risen.”

“ How would that alter the matter ?”

“ O, they talk about my being fresh-coloured, and all that, and say it's a sign that I live of the best, whatever I may charge to others. Just as

if I made the bread dear, instead of the corn being as high to us bakers as to other people ; and as if there was no assize of bread in London."

" And as if you cared for being called handsome," added Kay from behind, having come to breakfast in the midst of the greeting.

" I think you are handsome—very handsome," said little John Kay, looking up earnestly into Mrs. Skipper's bonny face. She stooped down to give him a hearty smack, and promise him a half-penny bun if he would come and see her.

" There now, master John, you well nigh made me spill my cider, boy. Here, Mary, hold your pitcher. Yes, it is for you—for all of you, I mean. You will give John a drop, I'm sure. Ah ! I thought you would like it, now it is so difficult to get any thing good to drink. Do but taste it, Mr. Kay. Is not it good ? It was sent me by a cousin of mine, and I thought I would bring you some, especially as I had to tell you that the bread is risen again. It is nineteen-pence now ! What do you say to that, Mary ?"

Mary, as usual, said nothing. She did not find that speech mended matters of this kind ; and besides, it was time she was setting about her task of purifying the distasteful water which they must drink, if they meant to drink at all, till the springs should flow again. She emptied the clear, fresh-looking cider into her own pitcher, and returned Mrs. Skipper's with a look which was less indifferent than her manner.

" What I say is," observed Kay, " that if bread is risen, our wages must rise. We are all

of one mind about that—that a man cannot live for less than will keep him alive ; to say nothing of his being fresh-coloured, Mrs. Skipper. We can none of us boast much of that."

" Well, how's your wife, Mr. Kay ? She was but poorly, I thought, when I saw her two days ago."

" O, she is a poor thing enough. She was not much to boast of when she had an easy life compared with the present ; and now she droops sadly. John can hardly call her very handsome indeed. Can you, John ?"

" John, carry your mother a cup of cider, if she is awake," said Mary ; " and tell her I am home, getting breakfast."

" There, that's right, Mary," said Mrs. Skipper. " You have such a way of telling giddy people what they should not say and do. I am going my ways directly, to leave you to yours. But send one of the children after me for a nice hot roll for your sister. The new bread is just coming out of the oven. And be sure you tell me whether she likes the cider, you know."

" And if she has not an appetite for the roll, we won't send it back, I promise you," said Kay. " She has got into the way of not touching her breakfast, lately ; and the same thing cannot be said of me, when I have been busy casting all night. Somebody will eat your roll, and thank you for it."

" That means that I may send two ; but——"

Kay protested, and Mrs. Skipper explained, and Mary announced breakfast.

"Breakfast, such as it is, Mrs. Skipper," observed Kay. "No disrespect to your bread! But time was when I could afford it newer, and plenty of it, and a bit of something to relish it. One does not relish it so well when one can't cut and come again, but may have just so much and no more."

Mrs. Skipper wished he could see what she saw of poor creatures that could get none,—not the smallest and driest loaf, to try whether they could relish it. If the potato crop failed, she did not know what was to become of them; or of herself either, if they went on to look in at her shop window. She had not the heart to draw the bread, with them looking on, and not stuff a bit into the children's mouths. And, dashing away the tears from her bright black eyes, widow Skipper hastened whence she came, hugging by the way the child who was sent to wait her pleasure about the roll.

Before sitting down to his scanty meal, Kay went to rally his wife about what she had seen and been alarmed at in her late expedition, and to advise her to cheer up, instead of giving way, as she seemed disposed now to do. She was up, but he supposed hardly awake yet; for she had not much to say, and seemed flurried, and not able to take exactly what he meant. He thought she had better have slept another hour.

CHAPTER II.

A HARVEST EVE.

MARY rightly believed that there was a chance for the corn on the low grounds, if rain should speedily fall. By the time that the horned sheep of the western moors had cropped the last bite of juicy grass in the dells, they were gathered together by the shepherd to abide the storms which were gathering about the summits of Wharnside and Pennygant. While they stood trembling and bleating in the rising blasts, the cattle in the vales left the muddy pools, and turned towards the shelter of the stooping and rustling trees ; and many a human eye was raised to the whirling mills, whose inactivity had wearied expectation so long.

Neither the wind, nor the rain which followed, pleased every body, any more than any other wind and rain. Havoc was made by the blasts in Mr. Fergusson's young plantations, where a thousand saplings stood, dry enough for firewood, ready to be snapped by the first visitation of a gust. Trees of loftier growth strewed the Abbey lawn, and afforded matter of lamentation to the elder members of Mr. Fergusson's family, and of entertainment to the children, who watched for hours the operations of the woodmen in removing the fallen ornaments of the estate. Every washerwoman within some miles who happened to be pursuing her vocation that day, had to

mourn the disappearance of cap or handkerchief from the line or bush ; and how many kitchen chimneys smoked, no chimney doctor near would have ventured to say. Meanwhile, the millers and their men bestirred themselves cheerily, as sailors do when the breeze freshens after a long calm ; and careful housewives dislodged all unclean insects from their water tubs, and swept out their spouts in preparation for the first droppings. As might have been expected, the rain came, not in droppings, but in sheets. No woollen coat, woven or unwoven, saved the shepherd and his sheep from being drenched to the skin. Every tree became a commodious shower-bath to the horse or cow beneath it. Many an infirmity was exposed in thatch or tile which had never before been suspected ; and everybody looked gloomy in Anderson's farm, (except the ducks,) from the apprehension that the meagre crops would be laid, past recovery. On the first cessation of the storm, matters did appear sad enough : in the villages, every thing smutted, from the smoke of the furnaces being beaten down ; in the country, all brown and muddy-looking till the waters had had time to retire into the ditches, and the verdure to show itself ; and even then, the straggling oats and prostrate wheat presented but a small improvement on their former appearance. Landlords and tenants crossed each other's path while taking their rounds, but could not agree as to the probabilities of the approaching harvest. Mr. Fergusson hoped that a day or two would make a great difference in the appearance of the fields ;

while Anderson was certain that it was too late for the crops to revive under the gentlest rain, and that they would prove to have been utterly destroyed by the flood which had swept down from the hills. Neither could establish his point till harvest came.

Then each proved to be right. On the high grounds, the produce was, in truth, scarcely worth carrying away, while in the vales there was better work for the harvest wain. Even there, however, there were more gleaners than reapers ; and the artisans who came forth in the evening to see what had been done, agreed with the disappointed Irish, who must travel farther in search of harvest work, that the total crop would indeed turn out to be far below the average.

The best of the harvest fields did not present the usual images of peace and contentment.

“Out, out, out !” cried Anderson, to a troop of boys and girls who had pressed in at his heels as he entered a field whence the sheaves were not yet carried. “How many times am I to have the trouble of turning you out, I wonder ? Wait, can’t ye, till the corn is carried ?”

At the flourish of his stick, the intruders took flight, and jostled each other at the gate, in their hurry to get out ; but they returned, one by one, keeping in his rear, like a spider watching a fly, till they could stoop down behind a shock, and filch from the sheaves at their leisure. Following the example of the children, a woman dropped in at the gate, another entered from a gap in the fence, at a moment when the farmer had his back

turned, while the heads of two or three men appeared over the wall. It was plain that the tenth commandment was not in the thoughts of any present, unless in Anderson's own.

"Here again, you rogue!" he cried, lifting up a boy by the collar from a hiding-place between two sheaves. "You are the very boy I told twice to go to the field below. There is plenty of room for you there."

"But there is no corn there, sir."

"Corn or no corn, there you shall go to be made an example of for pilfering from my sheaves. Here, Hoggets, take this lad down to the Lane field, and give him a good whipping in sight of them all."

"O, no, no! Mercy, mercy!" cried the boy. "Mother said I should have no supper,—father said he would beat me, if I did not make a good gleaning. I won't go, I tell you; I won't. O, sir, don't let him beat me! Ask father! I won't go."

Mary Kay came up to intercede. The boy was her nephew; and she could assure Mr. Anderson that John was told to go home at his peril without an apron full of corn.

"Then let his parents answer for his flogging, as they ought to do, for driving the boy to steal," said the farmer. "I am not to be encroached upon because they choose to be harsh with their boy; and I tell you, mistress, this pilfering must be put a stop to. This very season, when the crop is scanty enough at the best, I am losing more than I ever did before by foul gleaning.

Let the boy's parents be answerable for the flogging he shall have. Hoggets, take him away."

"Had you not better send Hoggets to flog the boy's father and mother?" Mary inquired. "That would be more just, I think."

"O, do, sir, do!" entreated John; "and I will show him the way."

"I dare say you would; and this aunt of yours would find some excuse next for their not being flogged."

"I won't promise but I might," said Mary; "for they may have something to say about what has driven them to covet your corn. It is not the going without one supper, but the being supperless every night. Instead of a beating, once and away, such as they promised the poor lad, it is the scourge of want, sir, for week after week, and month after month."

"I am very sorry to hear it; and if they come and ask in a proper way, they may chance to get some help from me. But, as to countenancing my property being taken because they are poor, it would be a sin for their boy's sake, and for the sake of all the boys that would follow his example. So, off with him!"

Mary was far from wishing to defend the act of pilfering from sheaves, and equally far from supposing that her brother and sister thought of any such mode of fulfilling their command when it was delivered to their boy. Mr. Anderson might be perfectly sure that Kay and his wife would not come and ask, in the "proper way" he alluded to, for what they were wearing themselves

out in struggling to earn ; and as for the boy, she believed she could answer for him that the being deprived of what he had gathered, or, at most, a private beating, would avail to make him observe other commands in endeavouring to fulfil those of his parents. Anderson still thought differently ; and, perceiving at the moment half a dozen little heads peeping from behind so many shocks, was confirmed in his opinion that the boy must be flogged. Hoggets accordingly whipped up the little lad, slung him, screaming and writhing, over his shoulder, and disappeared behind the wall, while the farmer hunted out the other culprits, and sent them, for a punishment, to see their companion flogged in the field. Mary first detained them to see her restore John's handfuls of corn to the sheaves, and then went down to do the best she could for her poor little nephew in his agony.

She presently overtook him, and found that his agony was now of a more mixed character than she had expected. He was alternating between hope and fear. The quivering nostril and short sob told what his terror had been, while his raised eye, and efforts to compose himself, testified to his trust that he had found a deliverer. Two young ladies on horseback were talking with Hoggets, and looking compassionately on the culprit, while Hoggets touched his hat every instant, and had already lowered the boy from his disgraceful elevation. The Miss Fergussons only asked him to delay till they had overtaken Mr. Anderson, and endeavoured to procure pardon ;

and Hoggets thought it was not for him to resist the wishes of the ladies.

The whole matter was argued over again, and the farmer strongly urged with the plea that corn was more tempting to the poor than ever before,—the quartern being now one shilling and eight-pence. The farmer thought that the stronger the temptation, the more exemplary should be the punishment. If he could supply every bread-eater near him with abundance of corn, so as to obviate the temptation, he would gladly do so, as he held prevention to be better than punishment; but, as he had not this in his power, the best thing he could do was to discourage compliance with temptation. In this case, however, as the boy had been a good deal punished by exposure, and by being off and on in his expectations of being flogged, enough was done for example, and John might run home as fast as he liked.

"That will not be very fast," Mary observed, "since he is to be beaten at the end of his walk for bringing his mother's apron home empty. I have heard say, sir, by one that knows well, that our people are treated like this boy; brought low for want of food, driven to skulk and pilfer for it, and then disgraced and punished. But there is this difference, that you cannot prevent the want, and, in the case of the people, it might be prevented."

"Chatham put that into your head, I suppose. It is just like one of his sayings. But I wish he would not make the worst of matters, as if any thing ailed the nation more than there has been

ever since people herded together with mischief-makers among them here and there."

Miss Fergusson hoped that there had not always been, and would not always be, such proceedings as some which were going on now. The coppice field had been green and smooth as velvet the evening before, and this morning at daybreak it was brown and trampled. The skulkers and meditators of violence had been there ; and the records of her father's justice-room would show that the disgrace and punishment spoken of by Mary were fast following the destitution which is the cause of crime. She hoped Mr. Anderson did not suppose that this was the natural state in which people will always live, while congregating for the sake of the advantages of society.

Anderson hoped that men would grow wiser in time than to set up midnight drills as a remedy for the distress which always occurs from time to time ; and then Mr. Fergusson would have less disagreeable justice-work to do. The ladies believed that the shortest way to obviate the folly would be to obviate the distress ; and, as they moved on, were recommended to pray for a better harvest than had this year blessed the land.

John had stolen away in advance of their horses. Finding that they were proceeding to join their brothers, who had been grouse-shooting in the moors since daybreak, it occurred to the poor boy that by following in the track of the gentlemen, he might chance to pick up something which would serve as a propitiation at home

for his failure in the article of corn. It was possible that a wounded bird or two might have been left by the sportsmen, and that those who could not purchase bread might sup off game:—no uncommon occurrence in a country where the tenants of a preserve are better fed than the inhabitants of a village. Half resolving to try his fortune on the other side the hills, and never to face his parents again unless he could find a black cock, John plunged into the moors, keeping the ladies in view from a distance, as a sort of guide to the track that the sportsmen had been pursuing. He had not speed of foot to sustain, for any length of time, his share of the race. The riding party disappeared in the dusk; no living thing crossed his path, but many inanimate ones put on the appearance of a fluttering bird to deceive the agitated and hungry boy; and the breeze which stirred them did not cool his brow. He could nowhere find a pool of water from which he might drink. His legs bent under him; and at the thought of how far they must yet carry him before he could reach shelter, north, south, east, or west, he began to cry.

Tears do not flow long when they may flow freely. It is the presence of restraint, or the interruption of thought, causing the painful idea to recur, which renders it difficult for a child to stop a fit of crying. John had no such restraint, and was subject to no further interruption than the silent appearance of light after light in the village below, and the survey of an occasional sheep, which came noiselessly to look at him and

walk away again. By the time that the dew began to make itself felt upon his face, he was yawning instead of crying ; and he rose from the turf as much from a desire to be moving again as from any anxiety as to what was to become of him this night. A manifold bleat resounded as he erected himself, and a score or two of sheep ran over one another as he moved from his resting place, giving hope that the shepherd was at no great distance. It was not long before he was seen through the grey twilight, moving on a slope a little to the west ; and, to John's delight, he turned out to be an acquaintance, Bill Hookey, who lived close by the Kays till he went upon the moors in Wilkins the grazier's service.

" How late are you going to be out, Will ?" was John's first question.

" As late as it be before it is early," replied Will. " Yon's my sleeping place, and I am going to turn in when I have made out what is doing on the river there. Look farther down,—below the forge, boy. They are quiet enough this minute, or the wind is lulled. When it blows again, you may chance to hear what I heard."

" But about sleeping," said John. " I am mortally tired, and I've a great way to go home. Can't you give me a corner in your hut till morning ?"

" Why, I doubt there will be scarce room, for I promised two of my ewes that they should have shelter to-night ; and this lamb is too ten-

der, you see, to be left to itself. I don't see how they can let you be served."

John promised to let the ewes have the first choice of a snug corner, and to be content with any space they might leave him, explaining that he wanted to be abroad early to glean, and that it would save him a long walk to sleep on this side Anderson's fields, instead of a mile to the east of them. He said nothing at present about his hunger, lest it should prove an objection to his abiding in Will's company. The objection came spontaneously, however, into the mind of the prudent Will.

"I hope you've your supper with you, lad, or you'll fare hardly here."

"O, never mind supper," said John, brushing his sleeve across his eyes. "I have gone without often enough lately."

"Like many a one besides. Well, if you don't mind supper, so much the better for you. I have left but a scanty one for myself, I was so mortal hungry at dinner time; and there is no more bread and milk in the jar than the lamb will want."

"Can't I get some fresh sweet grass for the lamb that will do as well? Do let me! Pretty creature! I should like to feed it."

The offer was scornfully declined, and he was told that he might help any of the older lambs to graze, but that he must, at his peril, touch this particularly precious, newly-dropped lamb. John was more disposed to graze on his own account

than to assist any creature in eating what he could not share. It next occurred to him to propose a bargain. He thought it promised to be a cold night. Will agreed that it might be middlingly so. John had his mother's stout apron with him, and Will should be welcome to it to wrap the lamb in, if John might have some of the lamb's bread and milk. Will had, however, a provokingly comfortable woollen wrapper, one end of which was always at the service of the pet lamb for the time being. While the next mode of attack was being devised, the soft pacing of horses' feet on the turf, and the occasional striking of a hoof against a flint, were heard; and Will, offering an obeisance which was lost in the darkness, made bold to inquire what sport the gentlemen had had on the moors.

"Excellent sport, if we had bagged as many as we brought down," answered one of the youths: "but thieves seem to be as plentiful as furze-bushes hereabouts. There were so many loiterers about our steps that our dogs could not move quick enough when we brought down more than one bird at a time."

"There will be a savoury supper or two eaten to-night by those who sport without pulling a trigger," observed the other Mr. Fergusson. "But they are welcome to my share of the powder and shot they have helped themselves to."

John's heart swelled at the thoughts of how he should like to be a sportsman after this

fashion, especially as the gentleman declared that he should have been welcome.

The ladies had paused to listen to another such sound from afar as Will had described. Many of the twinkling lights from the village had disappeared, and there seemed to be a great bustle below the forge, displayed as often as the big bellows exerted themselves to throw out a peculiarly vivid flame to light up the banks of the river. Will was of opinion that the people were in a hurry for their corn, and unwilling to await Kirkland's time for opening his granaries, and unlading his lighters. There had been talk,—as he had overheard on the moors,—of going down the river to where the lighters took in their cargoes, and demanding the distribution of the corn upon the spot. Probably this was what was now being done at Kirkland's, instead of a few miles nearer the river's mouth.

"It is time we were off, if that be the case," cried one of the gentlemen. "Kirkland must not be borne down in this manner, for the people's sake any more than for his own. Come, Charles. The girls will be safe enough with Jackson. Let us run down to the village. Here, little boy! You know Anderson's? You know Mr. Anderson himself?"

John hung down his head, and acknowledged that he knew Mr. Anderson.

"Well, here is a shilling for you. Run to Mr. Anderson, and beg him from me to come down, with his steadiest men, if he has any, to

Kirkland's premises, as fast as possible. Off with you ! What are you waiting for ?"

" If he should be gone already, sir ?"

" Why, then, go and call your father, if your father is not an ass, like the rest of the people hereabouts."

John heard one of the young ladies check her brother for his expression, reminding him that nothing makes the ears grow so fast as the having an empty stomach ; and the boy pondered for a moment whether his father's ears had lengthened since the time when the family had become subject to hunger. His hand involuntarily went up to the side of his own head ; and then came the speculation whether he should offer Will a high price for the lamb's bread and milk on the spot, or wait to change his shilling at Mrs. Skipper's counter. A sharp rebuke from his employer for his delay sent him bounding down the slope, calling up his courage to face the farmer, and consoling himself with thoughts of real white bread, dispensed under Mrs. Skipper's bright smile.

Alas ! Mrs. Skipper had no bright smile, this evening, even for John ; much less for any one who had not so decided an opinion about her being very handsome. Anderson had looked full as grave as John expected, whether about the matter in hand, or the boy's past offence, was not clear ; but the farmer's gravity was nothing to Mrs. Skipper's terror. She scolded everybody about her, ran from one neighbour to another for advice whether to barricade her win-

dows, and could by no means attend to John's demand of a penny roll till he was on the point of helping himself; and, slipping the shilling into the till, Mrs. Skipper huffed him when he asked for change, and turned her back upon him so as to make him fear that he had made a more costly bargain, after all, than if he had bid for the lamb's bread and milk upon the moor. All this was not without cause. A friendly neighbour had come up from the river-side to warn her that it had been proposed by the people assembled round Kirkland's granaries, that, failing a supply of food from his stores, the hungry should help themselves out of the baker's shop. It seemed but too probable that the threat would be executed; for Mrs. Skipper found (and God forgive her, she said, for being sorry to hear it!) that Kirkland was prepared for the attack; having thrown open two granaries to show that they were empty, and promised that he had something particular to say about the wheat on board the lighters; something which was likely to send the people away as hungry as they came.

A champion soon appeared in the person of Kay, who was almost the only man of the village who was not engaged on the more important scene of alarm. Women came in plenty, and children stood, like scouts, in the distance; but the women were found to be very poor comforters, and the children ran away as often as they were wanted for messengers. Mary was there; and her indifference to the danger served almost as well as Kay's promised valour to

restore spirits to Mrs. Skipper. It was something to do when the most valuable part of the stock was carried away to be hidden in some safe place, and the oldest loaves ostentatiously placed so as to be stolen first, to taunt Mary with her not caring for what happened to her friends, and looking as indifferent as if she came merely to buy a threepenny loaf. Mary made no reply; but her brother declared that he must just say for her, that if she was indifferent about other people's concerns, so she was about her own. There was Chatham, very busy down by the river-side, with everybody listening to him but the one who had the most reason to be proud to hear what he said; and Mrs. Skipper would see, when she was cool, that it was rather hard to scold Mary for being better able to give assistance than if she was subject to being heated like some people. Mrs. Skipper begged a world of pardons. She was not half good enough for Mary to care at all about her, and she was ready to bite her tongue out for what she had said. As Mary did not intimate any wish to this effect, however, no such catastrophe took place, and the necessary disposition of affairs proceeded quietly.

Mrs. Skipper had not to wait long to know her fate. Chatham came to tell her that the people had been exasperated by finding that there was no good corn for them on Kirkland's premises, and had gone on towards Sheffield, to burn or pull down a mill or two, it was supposed, as some faces well known at the midnight drill

were seen among them. If the few who remained behind should come and ask bread of Mrs. Skipper, he advised her to give it without any show of unwillingness.

"Mercy on me! that will be hard work, if they look beyond the bread on the counter,—two days old," cried Mrs. Skipper. "Suppose they should get at the dough, what am I to do to-morrow? And the flour! There has not been time to hide half the flour! They will want to cut my head off every day for a week to come, if they strip me of my flour, and expect me to go on baking at the same price. O, Mr. Kay, what shall I do?"

"Do as dealers in corn in another shape have done, often and often," replied Chatham. "Bear your lot patiently as a dealer in that which the people want most, and in which they are most stinted."

Mrs. Skipper looked doubtfully at Mary for a further explanation of what it was that she was to do.

"Do you mean," asked Kay, "that they have stripped Kirkland of his corn, and expect him to sell more next week at the same price?"

"They would have done so, if Kirkland had had much wheat to part with. The trade of a corndealer, I have heard him and others say, has always been a hard one to carry on. All parties have joined against them, for as long a time as can be remembered."

"Ay; the farmers are jealous, I suppose, of their coming between them and the people,

thinking they could get better prices if there was nobody to be served between them and their customers. And the people, in the same way, think that they must pay higher for their bread, to enable the corndealers to live."

" Forgetting that the farmers have something else to be doing than buying and selling corn, here and there, wherever it is wanted, and getting it from abroad when there is not enough at home, and government lets more come in. But it is not only the farmers and the people. The government used to punish the buying up of corn where it was plentiful, and selling it where it was scarce. Many a corndealer has been punished instead of thanked for doing this."

" I do not see why any man need be thanked for doing what answers best to his own pocket, as it certainly does to buy cheap and sell dear. But to punish a man for coming between the people and want, seems to me to be more like an idle tale than anything to be believed."

" Kirkland's father was taken up and tried for doing this very thing, not longer ago than a dozen years or so. The law was against him, (one of the old laws that we are learning to be ashamed of;) but it was too clear that he had done no harm, for anybody to wish that he should be punished. So they let him go."

" Who told you this?"

" Kirkland himself told us so, just now. He said he had rather be brought to his trial in the same way, than have the people take the matter into their own hands to their own injury. I

thought it was very brave of him to say so at the moment."

" Why ? Were the people angry ?"

" Like to tear him to pieces."

" And he within their reach ?"

" Standing on the plank between the lighter and the wharf."

" Ugh ! And they might have toppled him into the water any minute !" cried Mrs. Skipper.

" I am sure I hope they won't come near me."

" The most angry of them are gone on, as I told you," replied Chatham. " And that is well for you, perhaps ; for never did you see angrier faces. They called out, two hundred voices like one, that it was a sin they should have to pay twenty pence for their quartern while he had a houseful of wheat stored up, and more coming."

" And so it is, if he can get more when that is done."

" That is the very thing he cannot be sure of doing, as he told these people they must know very well. No one can be sure beforehand when and how he may get in corn from abroad ; and, at any rate, it cannot be had till it has grown monstrously dear at home ; and so he insisted upon it that he was doing the wisest thing in selling his corn as others sell it, and no cheaper ; that we may not eat it all up now, and starve entirely before the end of the winter."

" Well, I grumble as much as anybody else at our having to pay twenty pence for our loaf ; begging your pardon, Mrs. Skipper, whose fault I know it is not. I, with a wife and children,

can't reconcile myself to such a price. I grumble as much as anybody."

" So do I," said Chatham.

" Only you don't blame Kirkland."

" Kirkland can't help the grievance, any more than you or I ; and I am sure he suffers enough by it. There is a loss of some hundred pounds by this one cargo. It is more than half spoiled."

" Spoiled ! How ?"

" The sea-water has got to it, and it is downright rotten."

" What a pity, when it is so particularly wanted ! Such accidents signify twice as much at some times as at others ; and that this should happen now—just when bread is at the highest ! O dear ! what a pity !"

" It would not signify half so much if there was more certainly coming, and the people knew what they had to depend on. But if more is ordered, it may come or it may not ; and it may be in good time, or not arrive till the season is far advanced ; and so much must be paid for shipping charges (always dear in autumn), that it may mount up as high as our own home supply, after all."

" What a worry Kirkland must be in !" observed Kay. " He is not one of the quietest at any time ; and now, between hurrying his correspondents abroad, and finding his cargo spoiled at home, and having the people gathering about him with their clamour, he must feel something like a dog with a saucepan tied to its tail."

" Not like your master, Mr. Kay," observed

Mrs. Skipper. "There is no law to meddle with his selling his brass abroad or at home, as he likes; and so he knows what to expect, and how to live with his neighbours; and has little to worry him."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Skipper. My master is prevented selling freely abroad and at home; and prevented by the same law that worries Kirkland. And the worry is great, I can tell you; though Oliver does not run about, losing his breath and fidgeting himself like Kirkland, but walks so solemn and slow, you might take him for a Quaker."

"Well, I thought, as his foundry is always at work, and people must have things made of brass, and nobody objecting,—I thought things went easily enough with Oliver."

"His foundry works at night," said Chatham, "and his metal runs as well at Christmas as at Midsummer; and yet Oliver's prosperity depends on rain and sunshine as much as if zinc and copper were sown in the furrows and came up brass."

"There, now," said Mrs. Skipper, "that is one of your odd speeches, Chatham. And Mr. Kay nods as if he knew what you meant."

"I have good reason to know," replied Kay. "I and my fellow-workmen must have higher wages when corn is scarce, and then Oliver must put a better pri e upon his brass, without either his or our gaining anything by it: and then

"O ay; there will be less brass bought; that is what you mean."

"Moreover, there are plenty of people abroad that want brass, and would take it if they could give us corn in exchange,—so regularly as that they and we might know what we are about. And so, as sure as sunshine or rain falls short, some of Oliver's furnaces die out: and as sure as Kirkland's corn-vessels might come and go, without let or hinderance, our foundry would send a light, night and day, over all the vale."

"That is the way Chatham's sayings come out," observed the widow: "but I think he might as well speak plain at once, and make no mysteries."

"I spoke plain enough about what was going to happen to you and your bread," said Chatham, "and now you will soon see whether it comes out true; for here is the street filling fast, I see."

"Poor souls!" cried the widow, having run out at her door to look. "They do not seem creatures to be afraid of, when one comes close to them;—so tired and lagging! I say, Dixon, won't you have something to eat after your walk? Smith, you look worse still, and I saw how early you were off to your work this morning, and you have a good way to go to supper. Try a roll, won't you? Come, that's right, Bullen, set to, and tell me if it is not good bread; and you, Taylor,—carry it home to your wife, if you scruple to eat it yourself.—Bless you, make no speeches! I only wish I had more; but this is all, you see, except the dough that is

laid for the morning, and that belongs to my customers, not to me.—Well; I am pleased you like it. I would have thought to get in some cheese, if I had known, before the shop was shut, that you would be passing.—Never make such a favour of it. I'll ask the same of you some day. Or you will remember me when times mend with you.—Do look, Mr. Kay; if they be not going to cheer!—I never thought to live to be cheered.—Bless them! how hearty they are!"

And laughing, sparkling, and waving her right arm vehemently, the dame watched in their progress down the street the neighbours whose approach she had thought, an hour before, she could scarcely survive. Kay followed the munching groups, to see what they would do next; and Chatham drew Mary's arm within his own, to escort her home, leaving the widow to bolt herself in, and survey at her leisure her bare shelves, and sweep down her empty shop-board, —soliloquizing, as she went on,

" I forgot these little sweet-cakes, or some of the children should have had them,—for they are rather stale. It is well they did not press for the dough, for I don't believe I could have refused them anything at the moment,—and then what should I have said to the Fergussons' man in the morning?—Well; it does look forlorn, now it is all over; and it was but this morning that I refused to take Mrs. Holmes's ten-shilling bonnet because I thought I could not afford it; and now I have given away,—let me see how many shillings'

worth of bread ! Ugh ! I dare not think of it. But it is done, and can't be undone ; and besides I dare say they would have taken it, if I had not given it ; and, as I bargained with them, they will 'do the same for me some day. Smith does look rarely bad, to be sure. I wish he be not going ; though, if he be, it will be pleasant to think that one gave him a meal when he was hungry. Not that it won't be pleasant to remember the same thing if he lives. I wonder what his poor wife's expectation is concerning him. If she loses him, I hope she will find it no more of a trouble than I have done. So much less than I thought ! I think poor Mrs. Kay droops almost as much as Smith. But there's no knowing. Those weakly people often live the longest ;—except, to be sure, when they have got into a habit like hers. Not a word has her husband ever let drop about it. I wonder whether he knows as much as I do. He shall never hear a word of it from me, nor not even Mary, though I fancy she can't be blind. Catch Mary Kay blind to anything ! For all she looks so dull and stony when she chooses, she sees as sharp as a hawk,—and has such a way of setting one down. She's a good creature too, with all she does for those children ; and nothing could be more handy than she was about the bread to-night. I wish she might chance to look in in the morning, and give me more of her handiness, to help to make the place look a little less forlorn than it does with all these empty shelves. I was very hasty, to be sure, in empty-

ing them ; but, as the parson said on Sunday, God loves a cheerful giver. So now, I will cast a look to see if the dough is rising, and go to bed ; for it must be full late, I am sure."

Chatham and Mary were meanwhile walking home, conversing after their fashion,—making six words do where others would use twenty. An incident occurred on which they understood each other without any words at all. A gleam of light fell across the street as a door on the shadowy side of the way slowly opened, to let out a woman, who walked along under the houses, slowly and with her head hung down. It was the door of the gin-shop that opened, and it would have been absurd to pretend not to know the woman. Mary instantly slackened her pace, and motioned to cross over to the dark side.

"She is steady enough," said Chatham. "She will get on very well by herself."

"To be sure she will. It is not quite come to that yet. But let her get home first, and not know that we have been following her. It is only merciful."

"She shall have mercy from me ;—more perhaps than from those who are answerable for her failing and sinking as she does, poor soul !"

Mary consented to turn back to the end of the street, to give a little more time, and asked whether grindstone cutting was not warm work in these sultry noons. She had learned all she wanted about grindstones by the time she could safely knock at her brother's door with the hope that there was somebody stirring within to open it.

"I say nothing about coming in to sit with you all till Kay comes, because——"

"I was not going to ask you to-night. To-morrow evening, perhaps. Good night now. I hear her coming. Good night."

And Chatham was out of sight from within, before Mrs. Kay, her bonnet off, and her cap somehow not put on, opened the door, and left Mary to fasten it.

CHAPTER III.

FASTERS AND FEASTERS.

THERE were two opposite lights on the horizon that night, to those who looked out from the village. While the moon sank serenely behind the dark western hills, a red flame shot up, amidst volumes of wreathing smoke, in the direction of Sheffield. Some persons were trying the often-repeated experiment of gaining bread by the destruction of that by which bread is gained. A metal-mill was gutted, its machinery broken, and its woodwork burned, because the sea water had got to Kirkland's corn; and more mills were threatened in case the price of bread did not fall within a few days. As no one could answer for the price of bread falling within the time specified, the only thing to be done was to take measures to avert the promised destruc-

tion. For this purpose, strict inquiries were made as to what the inhabitants of the district had been about the preceding evening ; who had gone home from the harvest-field ; who attended the arrival of Kirkland's corn ; and how many there were who could give no good account of themselves. Early in the morning the officers of justice were abroad, and Mr. Fergusson and his sons were seen riding about, greeted not the less respectfully wherever they went from its being known that their object was to bring some of their neighbours to justice. Mr. Fergusson's character stood too high among his tenants to allow of their thinking the worse of him under any misfortunes that might happen. Let him do what he might in his character of magistrate, he was trusted to do what was right, as he showed himself, on all occasions, not only compassionate to the sufferings of the people, but as wise in discerning the causes of the suffering as anxious to relieve it when relief was in his power. Accordingly, hats were touched when he looked in the faces of those whom he met this morning, and ready answers given to his inquiries where the innocent were called upon to speak, and respectful ones from the guilty, when the necessity came upon them of making out a case. All the complaisance that there was, however, was engrossed by the Mr. Fergussons. The constables got only sneers and short answers, and men and women looked suspiciously on one another all through the district, none knowing what a neighbour might have the power to tell. Perhaps so

many cross words were never spoken in one day in the vale, as the day after the burning of Halsted's mill. "What do you look at me for? You had better look to yourself," was the common sentiment at the forge, in the field, and on the alehouse bench. As for the children, they were so perplexed with instructions what they were to say, that it was only to be hoped no one would ask them any questions.

It was not to be supposed that Mrs. Skipper could stay quietly at home while strangers were passing up and down the street about whom her journeyman could give her no information, and while reports were travelling round of one neighbour and another being compromised. She burst in at Kay's, just after he was gone to his work, when his wife was preparing to put away breakfast, and Mary was beating out the corn which she had gleaned the evening before, and which was destined to the mill this day.

"I have not brought you a hot roll this morning, Mrs. Kay; no, nor so much as a crust. I cannot afford any more of that at present; and so you will not look for it from me."

"What do you speak in that way to me for? I don't know what you mean," said Mrs. Kay, with an angry, puzzled stare.

"Nor I what you would be at, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Skipper. "One would not believe you were the soft-spoken Mrs. Kay, now-a-days. You can be sharper in your speech than ever I am, let me tell you."

"That is the more reason why you should be

soft in yours," said Mary. " She has borne with you sometimes, when you have been better in health than she is now."

" Well ; that is true : and she does look so poorly. . . . Ah ! now, there's master John coming out with a speech about my fresh colour again."

John was not thinking about anybody's colour. He wanted to know whether it was not true that he had had eleven-pence change from her the night before.

" To be sure you had, after taking a penny roll."

John called his mother to witness, that she might tell his father, that he was in possession of a shilling before the troubles began at Kirkland's ; to say nothing of those farther on. His father had doubted his getting that shilling honestly, and had desired his mother to take possession of the eleven pence till the whole was unquestionably accounted for ; and now John wanted his money back again. Mrs. Kay did not, however, heed his request ; and the matter ended in Mary's persuading the boy that if he had the money by the time he was at liberty to go out, it would do very well, instead of pressing for it now that his mother was busy thinking of something else.

" Why, take care, Mrs. Kay !" cried her neighbour. " Your hand shakes so, you will certainly let the dish down, and that will cost you more than a meal of my best bread would have done. Well ! that is a beautiful potato to have left

among the peelings. And here's another! I wonder you let the children scatter their food about in that manner."

" 'Tis not the children," observed Mary. " They have not more than they are very willing to eat, poor things! Their mother has but little appetite, and she is apt to slip her food back into the dish, that it may not make her husband uneasy.—I want your help more than she does," she continued, seeing that Mrs. Skipper's officious assistance was obstinately refused by the poor woman. " Will you step behind, and help me to beat and winnow my corn, if you have a minute to spare?"

With all her heart, Mrs. Skipper said; but she *had* an errand, though it was not to bring cider or hot bread. She had learned the secret of making potato-bread: not the doughy, distasteful stuff that many people were eating, but light, digestible, palatable bread. She would not tell the secret to everybody,—giving away her own trade; but when she saw a family of old friends eating potatoes, morning, noon, and night, she could not help telling them how they might get something better.

Mary thanked her, and observed that she did not know how she could put her gleaned corn to a better use than in making the experiment of a batch of mixed flour and potato-bread.

" Ah! do; and I will treat you to the baking, and look well to it myself. For my credit's sake, you know; having set you to try. Come, let us have the corn beat out."

They went to the back of the house to thresh and winnow, and then the widow's first exclamation was about how sadly out of sorts Mrs. Kay seemed to be.

"These are not times for her," replied Mary. "They bear harder upon such as she was than upon anybody. Who could have thought, you know, when she was an only child, brought up delicately for a poor man's daughter, that she would come to loathe a potato breakfast, and have no other?"

"Bless you! I know," whispered the widow, with a wise look. "People may take things over-night that leave them no sense, nor temper, nor appetite in the morning. My dear, I see how it is."

Mary was apparently too busy with the wheat to take any notice of this intimation. The next thing she said was,

"Where are all the potatoes to come from that will be wanted if people take to this new sort of bread? and indeed whether they do or not; for potatoes they must eat, either by themselves or made into bread. How are we to get enough?"

"The price is rising, they say; faster than the price of anything else, except corn: and if you go up yonder towards the moors, you will see what a quantity of new ground is being taken up for growing potatoes. I have had half a mind to try what I could do with a bit of a field myself. Anderson knows what he is about, generally; and what he tries in a large way might be safe for such as we in a small."

“ I would not try,” replied Mary.

“ No, not if you were me, because you think I fly from one thing to another, and do myself harm.”

“ Besides,” said Mary, attempting no denial, “ how will it be with you next year, if there should chance to be a fine wheat and barley crop? People do not live on potatoes when they can get bread; and I am sure it is not to be wished that they should. I hope there will be much less demand for potatoes next year; and it is likely there will. We have had so many bad seasons, it cannot be long before a good one comes.”

“ And then what a pity it will be that so much money has been spent in fencing and managing these potato-grounds! It may chance to come to be worth while to turn the sheep on again. *That would be a pity.*”

“ Say rather it is a pity they were ever turned off. The land on the moors is much more fit for them than for us to feed off; and leaving them there would leave the money that is spent on the land (more than it is worth, if matters went on in their usual course) to be used in a more profitable way.”

“ In what way?”

“ Why; take your own case. If you pay so much for hedging and ditching, and draining, and manuring the potato-ground you have a mind for, and the crop brings you no more next year than the same plot now brings as a sheep-feed, is not the money just lost that was laid out

in making a field of it? My opinion is that it would bring less; and if it does not, it ought to do. Our people will be badly off indeed if food is so high next year as to make them take your potatoes at a price that would make your bargain a good one; and if they are obliged to do so, they will be eating up in those potatoes the money that should have set some of them to work at weaving or cutlery-employment. Better buy corn of Kirkland when we can, and let the sheep graze on."

"Ay, when we can. There is the very thing. If we could always do that, as much as we pleased, we should not spend much of our money on the moors; but it is because it is all a chance whether we shall be buying of Kirkland next year, that one thinks of taking the chance of potatoes selling well."

"I would not."

"No, not you. You would spend your money, if you had any, in a little bargain of grindstones, for the sake of a certain person."

"That would depend on the price of potatoes," replied Mary, smiling, "for they would depend on the price of corn; and on the price of corn mainly depends the cutlery trade; and where is the use of grindstones unless the cutlery business flourishes?"

"There is another thing to be looked to; and that is, that those you help in cutting grindstones do not get themselves into trouble;—ay, by being abroad at night, and having the constables after them in the day. I would have you

consider that, my dear. Mercy ! how frightened you look,—as white as my apron ! Now, don't push me away because I let out a thing that made you frightened."

"Angry—very angry," said Mary.

"Not with me, to be sure ; for I did not make it, be it true or not true ; though I need not have cast it in your teeth as I did. It was Dick Rose told me ; and he said he knew it from——"

"Do get me a little vinegar, Mrs. Skipper. I never pinched my finger so smartly before. I shall not be able to get my thimble on this week."

"Well, now, it was that made you turn white, while you pretended to be so angry with me that you made my heart beat in my throat. I shall know you now another time, mistress Mary."

"Not you," thought Mary, as her giddy companion bustled into the house for vinegar.

"I don't see your sister," said she, returning, "but I guessed where to look for the vinegar. Is the pain going ? Well, only do you ask Dick Rose about how the folks were seen creeping out of the quarry, one by one,—those that worked there, and some strangers that came to visit them ; and how——"

"I shall not ask Dick Rose any such thing, when there is a person that can tell me so much better," said Mary.

"Ay, if he will."

"John, fetch me the large blue apron," cried Mary ; "and bring out Nanny with you. I

promised she should lend a hand, and see the chaff fly."

Before John could reach the door, a sharp scream,—the scream of a child,—was heard from within. Mary flew to see what had happened, but just as she was entering, her brother, seeing that some one was behind her, slammed the door in her face, and was heard to bolt it. Mrs. Skipper would not listen to what she had to say about the child having a fall, but exclaimed,

"Well, I should not have thought Mr. Kay could have behaved in that manner to you; and he looked at me quite fierce, so as I thought had not been in his nature."

And she stepped to the window to tap, and ask an explanation: but she caught a glimpse of something that quieted her, and sent her to stoop down over the wheat again, without looking at Mary, or speaking another word. Kay was carrying his wife up stairs. The helpless arm, hanging over his shoulder, was just visible, and the awe-struck children, suspending their crying, moved Mrs. Skipper to concern too deep to be expressed in her usual giddy speech.

"Which way are you going?" asked Mary at length. "I am off for the mill, as soon as I can get in to take the children with me."

"And I home; and you may depend on me, you know for what. My tongue does run too fast sometimes, I know; but you may depend on me, as it was only by a chance that I was here."

"Thank you!" replied Mary, warmly. "And

I will take it kindly of you to show me the way about the bread, as soon as my corn is ground."

By the united resources of the children within, the door was unbolted, and the party allowed egress into the street, when Mrs. Skipper turned down, and Mary up; the children asking her, one to go out of the way for the sake of the pond on the heath, and another hoping to jump down five steps of the mill-ladder, four having been achieved last time. Mary would have been glad to forget their mother as easily as they.

When Warden saw her toiling up the slope on the top of which the mill stood, her bundle on her head, and a child tugging at each side of her gown, he civilly came down to relieve her, and told her that she was more welcome than on the occasion of her last visit. It was a fine breezy day, he observed, and perhaps she might like to look about her from the top of the mill, if she did not mind the shaking that there always was in a wind. Mary thanked him, but dared not leave the children, lest they should put themselves in the way of the sails. This difficulty was soon obviated by the miller's taking the girl upon his shoulder, and calling to his man to bring up the boy, and let him play among the sacks in the first story, or climb higher, as he liked.

"I suppose you saw the fire finely from here, if you chanced to be looking out last night," Mary observed.

"My man did, as he stayed to take advantage of the wind. He says it lighted up every turn of the river between this and Sheffield. You may

see the smoke still, among the other smoke. Half the country has flocked there this morning, my father-in-law told me just now, as he passed on his way to pay his rent. It is a good time to choose to pay his rent, when every body is thinking of something else than emptying his pockets. Otherwise, it is not the safest and pleasantest thing in the world to be carrying money over the by-road between this and Fergusson's. Yonder he goes," continued the miller, stooping to the little girl whom he was keeping steady with his arm round her waist. "Yonder goes Mr. Anderson, on his black mare. You may see him trotting along the lane between those young oaks."

"He will come back slower in the evening, when he has left his money behind him," observed Mary.

"He will not wait till evening. He will just finish with the steward, and come home again, for the Mr. Fergussons are abroad over the country to-day; and besides, my father-in-law is wanted at home every hour of the day while the improvements are going on. Look how busy he is thereabouts."

"I see; they drive the poor sheep higher and higher up the moors, with their walls and their ditches."

"Yes, year by year. Before these many bad seasons, the sheep used to browse on this very slope where my mill stands. I used to come up among the bleaters every morning."

"You speak as if the bad seasons were the cause of the change."

" And so they are, mainly. Where numbers increase as they have done here in my time, more food will be wanted at all events, be the seasons what they may. But when the soil yields scantily, for years together, the inclosing will go on faster, from the cry for food. Yonder field, red even now with poppies, would never have been sown if the nine-acres in the bottom had yielded as they ought. The nine-acres used to yield as much as was reaped this year in itself and the poppy-field together."

" And there has been all the cost of taking it in besides."

" Yes ; and my father-in-law does wisely to pay that cost (if he must pay it) before his rent is raised. He and the steward will have an argument about that rent to-day, I fancy. The lease will be up soon now, and rents are rising every where ; and I suppose my father-in-law is content to let his mount up too. He would not otherwise be carrying on all these works."

" I wonder at his being content to pay more rent after so many short harvests."

" It is easier than after larger ; for corn sells dear, more than in proportion to its scarcity. Nobody can tell you better than Anderson that a single short harvest makes a heavy pocket ; much more a succession of short harvests."

" Till the poor get a-head of the rate-payers, I suppose,—no longer. When Mr. Anderson has to maintain half of us down in the village, because we cannot buy food, he will find us lighten his pockets as fast as bad years can fill them."

“ The manufacturers must help him then. They must raise their people’s wages——”

“ And so must Anderson.”

“ They must raise their people’s wages, and maintain the poor in the towns, and in the working villages.”

“ I wish the manufacturers joy of their good nature. They first pay dear for their own bread, and then pay dear for the labour which is to buy their workmen’s bread, and then spend what profits are left in supporting those whose labour they cannot employ ; and all to make Anderson’s and other farmers’ pockets heavy for a little while after bad seasons. I wish them joy of their patience.”

“ Anderson will want patience too, when his turn comes. Depend upon it, as soon as he gets fairly saddled with a high rent and high rates, there will come a fine crop or two to make prices as low in proportion as they now are high. He cannot bring down his men’s wages all in a day ; much less can the rates be disburthened at once ; and so it will be well if he makes ready beforehand for such a change.”

“ I hope he does make ready ; but what I see there looks little like it.”

“ What, you mean the bay-window and balcony now making to my house, and the shrubbery he is laying out. All that was no wish of mine, for I thought the white house looked very neat as it was before ; and the bit of garden behind was as much as my wife and I had time to attend to. But her father liked that his daugh-

ter's house should be improving while he was adding so much to his own, and he made us accept of the alteration, whether we would or no. He said, that while he was sending my wife's sister to Paris, and bringing up her brothers to look higher than he once thought of for them, he could not leave her neglected, as if he was ashamed of her having married more humbly than the other girls will do."

" And his own house looks hardly like the same place. His having built up among all the rambling old parts gives it one face as a whole."

" Yes ; three more bad years, and it will look like a gentleman's mansion. Yes, yes ; these are the joyous rent-days, when the steward gets every farthing, and pretends to shake his head because it is no more ; and when the farmers try to look dismal about the short crops, and then sing merry songs over their ale,—such of them as have not taken to port. Well, the millers' day will come in time, it is to be hoped."

" When will that be ?"

" When the people are not setting their wits to work to make potato-bread, and eating every thing that grows rather than flour. We have had more going and coming, more watching and jealousy about waste, and more grumbling because we cannot grind for nothing,—more trouble of all sorts about a few trumpery bundles of gleanings this last week, than about fifty sacks when I first became a miller."

" I will give you as little trouble as I can with mine," said Mary ; " but you must not call it a

trumpery bundle, for it is worth much to me. If you knew how much, I might trust you not to waste any of it."

" You would not dream of my wasting, if you saw how carefully I look to every grain. Why, I drive away the very birds themselves, if they light when the sails stop at any time. We do not leave the sweepings to them and the wind, as we used to do, but sift them as a housemaid sifts for pins. That is the reason why I do not offer your young master a handfull for the pigeons, as I used to do."

" Don't think of it, pray. He is going to play with the ducks on the pond as we go home, and that will do as well: besides, I hear him laughing now, merry enough without the pigeons."

" Playing hide and seek with Jerry among the sacks, I fancy."

" Where he must have done playing for to-day," observed Mary. " How quiet every place looks for a working day!" she continued, giving one more glance round the horizon before she descended. " Except the sheep, creeping like mites on the uplands, and the labourers gathering like ants about the new inclosures, I see nobody stirring."

" I seldom see it so quiet, except on a star-light night, when there is no noise but the whizzing of the sails when they go by starts; or perhaps an owl from my gable. But you see the people in the quarries stick to their work, as if they had no share in what was doing last night." And the miller looked full at Mary as he spoke.

" I see a man or two with his pick in yonder stone-pit, hewing away as if nothing had happened. Cannot you see them ? Well, it is a wonder your head has stood the shaking in this breeze for so long. Many people can fix their sight on nothing after the first two minutes."

Mary was determined to see more of the quarries before she went home than could be discerned from the mill-top. She let one child peep into the hopper to see how the corn ran down to be ground, and the other to exhibit his jump of five steps, with a topple at the end of it, and then walked quickly away towards the part of the heath where bilberries were to be found, and where she thought she might leave her charge safely employed while she looked into the quarry to see whether Chatham was really there, and whether or not he had had any transactions with the constables since she saw him last.

CHAPTER IV.

A POOR MAN'S INDUCTION.

IT took but a little time to show the children how to find bilberries, and not very much longer to teach them not to eat what they found ; after which Mary was at liberty to walk round to the mouth of the stone-quarry, beside which the fashioning of grindstones went on, in subservience to the cutlery business of Sheffield. She avoided

the sheds where the sawing and smoothing proceeded, and looked only among the men who were excavating the stone. But few were at work this day ; Chatham was one of them. He was engaged high up, with his face to the rock, and having no glances to spare for the scene below him, or for the narrow, rough path by which his present position must be attained.

Mary had never been here before, and she lingered in hopes that Chatham might turn, and encourage her to go on. She gathered ragwort from the moist recesses by the way, and paused to observe how the ivy was spreading over a portion of the stone face of the quarry which had been left untouched for some time, and to listen to the water trickling down among the weeds by a channel which it had worn for itself. As Chatham still did not turn, she proceeded to climb the path, being aware that children who were playing in the bottom had given notice of her presence, and that face after face peeped out from beneath the sheds to gaze, and then disappeared again. When at length she laid her hand on the arm of the toiling man, he started as if his tool had broken under his blow.

“ Mary ! what brought you here ?”

“ I heard that the constables were after you.”

“ So did I ; and here I am, if they choose to come.”

“ And what next ?”

“ My words and deeds will be taken up against me, perhaps. Perhaps it may be found that I am a good friend to all the parties that were quar-

telling last night. This last is what I wish to be."

" And trying to be so, you will get blamed by all in turn."

" By all at once, if they so please. As often as they choose to ask my opinion, as they did last night, they shall have it, though they themselves try to hoot me down. I do not want to meddle; but, being bid to speak out, I will speak, out of the fire or the water, if they bid me burn or drown. So it is not the notion of a constable that can frighten me."

" Out of fire or water, would you? Then much more would you speak in a moonlight field. O, tell me if you were there."

" How did you spend your thoughts, Mary, those nights that you sat by the spring, during the drought? What were you thinking about when your sister threw down the pitcher that you caught? That must have been a weary night to you both."

" You saw us! Then it is true; and you are one that hopes to get food by night-arming?"

" Not I. If the question of stinting food or getting plenty of it were waiting to be decided by arms,—the hungry on one side and the full on the other,—I would take up my pike with a hopeful heart, however sorry I might be that blood should be shed in settling so plain a matter. But what could a little band of pale complainers do, creeping under the shadows of yonder walls, with limbs as trembling as their hearts are firm? How should they be champions of the right while they

are victims of the wrong? They must be fed before they can effectually struggle for perpetual food."

"Poor wretches! they did look, it seemed to me, as if they had no life nor spirit in them."

"The spirit goes from the sunk eye to swell the heart, Mary; and those that have not strength of arm this day, may prove, many a day hence, what their strength of purpose has been. This is what the authorities ought to look to. Instead of scouring the country to wake up a wretch from the noon-day sleep which he seeks because he has had no morning meal, they should provide against the time when his arm will be strong to make his hungry dreams come true. Instead of carrying one man in disgrace from his loom, and another from the forge, and another from the quarry, to tell the old story—'We have been patient long, and can endure no longer,' our rulers should be satisfying themselves whether this is one of the stories which is to have no end. It cannot be very pleasing to their ears. The wonder is, that if they are weary of it, they go on from century to century to cry, 'Tell us this story again.'

"They cannot yet be so weary of it as we."

"No; for they hear others in turn with it,—tales of victories abroad, and of rejoicings at home in places where no poor man sets his foot. Their painters show them pictures of jolly rent-days, and the music they hear is triumphant and spirit-stirring. If they go abroad in the day, they laugh to see their enemies made mirth of in

the streets ; and if at night, they glorify themselves and one another in the light of illuminations. Thus they can forget our story for a while."

" I would rather they should come here than go myself among them, to be the merriest of the merry."

" Ay ; if we could set each of them down in this vale as one of ourselves, they would be surprised to find how dismal night-lights are when they shine upon scowling brows and hollow cheeks ; and how little spirit war-music has when it cannot drown the moans of the famished, and the cries of mothers weeping for their children."

" It seems to me that their very religion helps to deceive them about us. Last Sunday, the clergyman looked comfortably about him, and spoke very steadily when he read about the springing corn in the furrows, and that the little hills rejoice on every side. I thought of the red poppies and the stones in Fergusson's new fields, and the scanty gleanings on the uplands, and my heart turned back from my Bible."

" It should not have done that, Mary. It is not that the Bible is in fault, but that some people read it wrong. There is never any day of any year when there are not springing grains and ripening harvests on God's earth."

" You ought to be able to speak to that, having gone so far round the world when you were a boy at sea."

" I can speak to it. If there are angels hovering over the fields, as 'tis said there once were,

and if the earth lies stretched beneath them as in a map, they may point to one fruitful place or another, and never cease their song, 'Thou visitest the earth and waterest it. The pastures are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered over with corn. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.'

"But of what use is it to us that there is corn somewhere, if we have it not? Are we to bless God that he feeds some people somewhere, while there are still poppies and stones where we look for bread?"

"You might as well ask 'of what use is the fruit on the tree to him who sits hungering at its foot?' And, 'is not a parched traveller to repine at his thirst, when a well is springing in the neighbouring shade?' What would you say to hungering and thirsty men like these?"

"Bless God that there is fruit, and climb to reach it. Be thankful that there is water, and go down to take your fill."

"We are required by our rulers to do one half of this reasonable thanksgiving, and to forego the remainder. We are bidden to thank God for his gifts, but forbidden to reach and take. —How great is the folly of this, you would see at a glance, if you could go where I have been."

"To see how perfectly happy people are in the fruitful places, while so many are suffering here? To see how unequal is the lot of dwellers in different countries?"

"Not so; but worse. There is but too much equality in the lot of dwellers in fruitful and on

barren soils ; between those who are too many for their food, and those who bury their spare corn out of their way. If some were satisfied while others suffer, the sufferers might be the more patient because all were not afflicted like themselves ; but it is when all suffer, and might yield mutual relief, if they were not prevented, that patience is impossible. I would ask no man to have patience with our state who had seen the state of many others, striving after patience as painfully as we."

" What others ?"

" Why, there is the labouring man of Poland, for one. He creeps out of his log hut, shivering, half naked, in the first cold of autumn, to feed his pigs with the grain—"

" Grain ! What sort of grain ?"

" Wheat, or rye, as may happen ; whichever happens to be rotting the fastest. Between him and the black forests on the horizon are plains, stretching away for leagues upon leagues, some sprinkled with a few cattle, and some showing a stubble that you would be glad to have the gleaning of ; and others lying waste, though richer as soil than many a field of Anderson's."

" O, but that is a shame, with the people so poor."

" It would make the people no richer to till those wastes, unless the crops could sell. The people there do not want food—"

" So I think, if they feed their beasts on wheat and rye."

" They want clothes, and good houses, and all

that makes a dwelling comfortable; and yet, though our warehouses are overfull of broad cloth, and we could furnish twice as much metal-work as we do, if we had bread for the workmen, it is only by fits and starts that we will let Poland sell us corn, and clothe her sons. Then, again, near the Black Sea——”

“ Is that sea really blacker than other seas?”

“ The sun glitters there as bright as on the heaving Indian bays, and it is as blue when the sky is clear as any tarn in yonder hills. God has done all to make it beautiful, not only from above, but by spreading fertile tracts all along its shores. If man would do his part, sending ships upon its bosom, and leaving no spot desolate around, it might be made the happy place that, in my opinion, the whole earth might be made, and will be, some time or other.”

“ The people are not happy there now, then?”

“ Not what we should call happy, though they may like better than we should the flitting from plain to plain to gather corn, as bees flit from blossom to blossom for honey. They reap for three seasons from a field, and then move to another, leaving an exhausted soil and a desolate place behind them.”

“ We might teach them husbandry, if they would let us have some of the fruits of it.”

“ And then they might learn to live a little more like Christians than they do, and have some of the pleasures that we have, in the midst of all our hardships, in growing up from the state of brute beasts into that of thinking men. There

are other parts,—in America,—where thinking men live who fret in the impossibility of making their children wiser and more civilized than themselves,—which should be every man's aim for his children. They can give them work,—but what is it all for?—food. They can give them wealth,—but what does it all consist of?—food. They can hold out a prospect of increase,—but of what?—food. They long for a thousand comforts, if they could but convert their corn into these comforts. They perceive that there are a thousand advantages and blessings over the sea, if they could but stretch out a long arm to throw corn into our lap, and reach home—things which we can now use no more than they, because we have too little bread, and they have too much. Though their sons are thus condemned to be clowns, and ours to be paupers, we must hope that they will learn from our follies so to deal together as that the clown may become a wise man, and the pauper take his stand on the rights of his industry."

"But why, if so many countries are fruitful, is England alone barren?"

"England is fruitful in corn; but yet more so in men, and in arts which she chooses to make barren of food. England has corn on her hills, corn in her valleys, corn waving over her plains; yet this corn is not enough, or not always enough, for the multitudes who gather together in her villages, and throng her cities, and multiply about her workhouses. If this corn is not enough, England's duty is,—not to starve hundreds, or half-

starve thousands of her children, but to bring out corn from all the apparatus of her arts. She should bring out corn from her looms, corn from her forges, corn from her mines ; and when more than all this is wanted, let her multiply her looms and her forges, and sink new mines from which other millions may derive their bread."

" You dig bread from this hard rock, I suppose, when you furnish grindstones on which the cutlery is to be prepared which may be exchanged with the Russian and the American for corn."

" I do : and to limit this exchange is not only to limit the comforts of us workmen, but to forbid that there shall be more lives in our borders than the fruits of our own soil can support. There is room for myriads more of us, and for a boundless improvement of our resources ; these resources are forbidden to improve, and these myriads to exist. Whence rulers derive their commission thus to limit that to which God has placed no perceivable bound, let them declare."

" Then there are not too many of us, if all were wise."

" By no means. If all were permitted to be as happy as God bids them be, there would be neither the recklessness of those who multiply without thought, nor the forced patience of those who have a conscience and listen to it. If all were wise, they would proportion their numbers to their food ; but then that food would not be stinted by arbitrary laws which issue in evil to all. Our rulers turn away, if perchance they

see in the streets infants that pine for a while, only to die ; and pronounce that such children should never have been born. And it may be true ; but it is not for our rulers to pronounce, except with shame ; for it is only while waiting for their becoming just that it behoves the people to be as self-denying as they require."

" Strangers that pass this way for their pleasure," observed Mary, " wonder at the hardness of our shepherds in turning their tender lambs exposed upon the moors, where, if some thrive, many pine. Do not they themselves (as many of them as have to do with making laws) turn out the young of our cities into stony fields, where they pine like starving lambs ? There is small use in pitying—small kindness in saying that such should never have been born, if there are indeed fields where for stones they may gather bread."

" When I see money buried in the furrows of such fields," replied Chatham, " I feel that it is taken twice from those whose due it is ;—from the mechanic who, instead of standing idle, would fain be producing corn on his anvil ; and from the spiritless boor abroad, who would as willingly exchange his superfluity to supply his need. When I see the harrow pass over such fields, I see it harrow human souls ; and voices cry out from the ground, however little the whistling husbandman may heed them."

" The husbandman will not long whistle, if all must at length scramble for food. His turn to see his infants pine must come at last."

" At last ! It comes early, for there are more

to follow. There is the farmer to swear that it is hard upon him that his labourers must live, as it is upon his substance that they must live. Then comes he for whom the farmer labours in his turn. He complains that, let the sunshine be as bright, the dews as balmy as they may, he can reap scarcely half the harvest of his gains, and that he is pressed upon by the crowds who come to him for bread."

" He can hardly wonder at this, when it is he himself who forbids their going elsewhere. To what third party would he commend them ?"

" Perhaps he would quote Scripture, as may be done for all purposes, and tell them that the clouds drop fatness, and bid them look up and await the promised manna. Till it comes, however, or till he and his tribe have unlocked the paths of the seas, he has no more right to complain of the importunity which disturbs him than the child who debars the thrush from its native woods has to be angry when it will not plume itself and sing, but beats against its wires because its fountain is no longer filled."

" I could not but think something like this when I saw even so good a man as our Mr. Fergusson on rough terms with some of the people he met on the way, when he went out to view the harvest-home."

" The harvest-home which used to be a merry feast when it was clear that its golden fruits were to be wealth to all ! Now, there is no knowing what is to become of it ; whether it shall be divided and consumed in peace, or scrambled for

by men possessed by the demon of want, or burned by those who cannot share, and are therefore resolved that none others shall enjoy. It is said, and no one contradicts, that the harvest-moon rose clear, and lighted up alike every mansion and cottage in the dale; but I was abroad to see her rise; and I declare that with my mind's eye I beheld her eclipsed, shedding a sickly light, maybe, upon the manor and the farm, but blight and darkness into the dwellings of the poor."

"It has ever been God's hand that has drawn a shadow over sun and moon, but now—"

"Now man has usurped the office, and uses his power, not once and again to make the people quail, but day by day. To none is the sun so dark as to the dim-eyed hungerer. To none is the moon so sickly as to the watcher over a pining infant's cradle. Let man remove the shadow of social tyranny, let him disperse the mists which rise from a deluge of tears, and God's sun and moon will be found to make the dew-drops glitter as bright as ever on the lowliest thatch, and to shine mildly into humble chambers where those who are not kneeling in thanksgiving are blessing God as well by the soundness of their repose."

"Are those whom you meet at midnight of the same mind with you? Do they go to church on Sunday to bring away this sort of religion for the week?"

"They do not go to church,—partly because they know themselves to be squalid,—partly because, as you say, their hearts turn back from their Bible. They are slow to believe that their —

soul-sickness will be pitied somewhere, if not by man. They no doubt feel also some of the unwillingness of guilt ; but I can tell,—I will tell those whom it may concern,—that the way to bring these men from their unlawful drill into the church aisle is to preach to them full, and not hungering, that God giveth to all living things food in its season. This, like all other words of God, is true ; but with his vicegerents rests the blasphemy if shrunken lips whisper that it is a lie.—Such sufferers, if they did make Sabbath, have not the leisure that I have to work out their religion by themselves, during the week, making it and toil lighten each other.”

“ So that is what you do in this place,—high up on the face of the stone, with no moving thing near you but these dancing weeds overhead, and no sound but the dull shock of your own blows! So your religion is what you think over all day !”

“ In some form or other ; but you know religion takes many forms ;—all forms, or religion would be good for little. I am not always thinking of the church and the sermon ; but sometimes of how I am to advise the people that come to me, and sometimes of what I could tell the powerful if I could get their ear ; and oftener than all, Mary, of what was said between you and me the evening before, and what will be said this evening, and of what we may dare to look to in a future time.”

“ With so much to think about, you could do without me,” said Mary, smiling. “ You would hardly miss me much, if I was drowned to-morrow, till the country is quiet, and there is nothing more to be complained of.”

"Meanwhile, Mary, you want nothing more, I suppose, than to clean trenchers and wash and mend stockings. To do this would make you perfectly happy for evermore, would it?"

"It is light work cleaning trenchers for a half-starved family," replied Mary; "and as for the stockings, the children are going barefoot, one by one. So, no light jesting, Chatham; but tell me—"

"Who these men are just at your shoulder? They are constables, and come for me, I rather think."

"And what next?" inquired Mary, as she had done half an hour before.

"I know no more than when you asked me last; but I suppose they will either let me come back here to think over the matters we have been talking about, or put me where I may consider them at more leisure still, not having my tools with me wherewith to hew down stone walls. You well know, in that case, Mary, what I shall be thinking about and doing; and so you will not trouble yourself or be frightened about me. Promise me."

"Certainly: what should I be frightened about?" asked Mary, with white lips. "You cannot have done wrong,—you cannot have joined in—"

She stopped short, as the constable was within hearing. His office was an easy one, as Chatham cheerfully surrendered himself; and Mary turned to descend, as soon as he had flung on his coat and disposed of his tools. They were permitted to walk arm-in-arm, and to talk, if

they chose to do it so as to be overheard. Not being at liberty in heart and mind for such conversation as the constable might share, they passed in silence the groups of workpeople, some of whom grinned with nervousness or mirth, and others gazed with countenances of grave concern ; while a very few showed their sympathy by carefully taking no notice of what must be considered the disgrace of their companion. In a little while, Mary was told she must go no farther ; and, presently after, she was at the door of her own home, with a child in each hand,—one talking of bilberries, and the other telling a story of a duckling in the pool, which had billed a worm larger than it knew what to do with ; and how it ended with dropping the worm in deep water, and, after a vain poke in pursuit of it, had scuttled after the rest of the brood. All this Mary was, or seemed to be, listening to, when her brother looked out from the door, and told her impatiently that he had been watching for her this half-hour. His wife was asleep at present ; but he had not liked to leave her alone in the house, much as he wished to go out and see what sort of a net the constables were drawing in.

“ Have you heard of anybody that they have taken ?” he inquired.

“ Yes.”

“ Well ! Anybody that we know ?”

“ Yes ; Chatham.”

Kay looked at her for a moment, sent the children different ways, and then looked at her again.

" You are not down-hearted, Mary ?"

" No."

" He will come out clear, depend upon it: my life upon it, it will turn out well. Oh ! it will turn out a good thing,—a real good thing !"

" Everything does."

" Ay, ay, in the end ; but I mean——But come, sit you down. I am in no hurry to go out ; and I will get you something after your long walk."

" Pray do not ; I do not wish it, indeed. I will help myself when I am hungry."

As she seemed not to want him, Kay thought perhaps he had better go. Before he closed the door behind him, he saw that Mary was taking a long, deep draught of cold water.

CHAPTER V.

TAKING COUNSEL.

As there was sufficient evidence, in the magistrate's opinion, of Chatham's having been once present at the midnight drill, and active among the crowd by the river-side the night before, he was committed to prison, it being left to himself to prove, at the time of trial, for what purposes he had mixed himself up with the rioters. As he was a very important personage in his village, his jeopardy excited much speculation and interest. For the first two or three days, there was

much curiosity among the neighbours to see Mary, in order to observe how she took it. Mary was somehow always busy with her sister and the children ; but when a gossip or two had become qualified to testify to her aspect—that she looked just as usual,—and when the children were found to have nothing particular to tell about her, everybody was vexed at having been troubled on behalf of a person who was never put out, happen what might.

Times were so flat this autumn that there was abundance of leisure for talking about whatever might turn up, and no lack of tongues to treat thereof. Some of the foundry-men were turned off, as it had been necessary to raise the wages of those who remained. As there was no increase of business at the time this rise of wages took place, and as Oliver himself was living at a larger expense as provisions became dearer, there was no alternative for him but to turn off some of his men, contract his business, and be as content as he could with smaller profits than he had ever before made. By the rise of wages, his remaining men were, for a short time, relieved from the extreme of misery they had endured in the interval between the great increase in the cost of provisions and the raising of their wages ; but they were no richer than they had formerly been with two-thirds of the nominal amount of the present recompense of their labour. Want still pressed, and must still press, up to the point of Oliver having no more wages to give, unless the deficiencies of the harvest might be supplied

by large importations from abroad. In the uncertainty whether this would be done, and with the certainty before their eyes that there had not been food enough in the country for three years past, Anderson and the neighbouring farmers took in more and more land, and flung about the abundance of money they received for their dear corn.

This money was not the less buried in the inferior new land for its being passed from hand to hand among the labourers. The guinea that came out of Anderson's profits of the preceding year, to be paid to Kay as wages, was spent in buying a third less bread of Mrs. Skipper than might have been had in better years. The baker, in her turn, bought less flour of Warden with it than in former times ; and Warden used it for a dear bargain with Kirkland, and Kirkland with Anderson for wheat. Anderson paid it to the ploughman of his new fields, for less labour than the same sum had procured for better land, and with the prospect of a less return to the labour employed. The guinea would then go again into Mrs. Skipper's till for still less bread than before ; while Anderson was making answer to all complaints about this waste, that he should not long be the better for it, as the taking in of every new field would oblige him to pay his landlord more of the produce of every superior field at the expiration of his lease.

The circulation of this morsel of wealth, dwindling on every transfer, was easily traceable in a small society like that of the village. The

waste could be detected in every direction, and the landlord stood marked as the focus of it. Whether Mr. Fergusson was the better for the waste incurred on his account was a separate question ; and, till it was decided, he stood in a remarkable relation to the people about him : he was their injurer and their benefactor ;—their injurer, in as far as he was one of the persons for whose sake a bad system was upheld ;—their benefactor, in his capacity of a wealthy and benevolent resident among them. He was taunted with being the landowner, and was offered obeisance as Mr. Fergusson. All were complaining that he received an unconscionable share of the fruits of their labour ; but there was not one who would not have grieved at any misfortune that might befall him. They talked loudly against him and his class for narrowing the field of their exertions, and praised the pains and good-nature with which he devised employment for those who were perpetually being turned out of work.

The fact that he must have supported these extra labourers as paupers, if he had not rather chosen to get some work out of them in return for the cost of their subsistence, made no difference in the kindness with which Mr. Fergusson attended to their interests, and endeavoured to preserve in them a spirit of independence till better times. The effort was vain under a system which authorized men to say that they had not surrendered their independence, but that it had been taken from them, and that those who took it away might make the best they could of it.

absence. Notwithstanding all that Fergusson could do, paupers increased in the parish ; and while a few stout men, who were turned off from the various works in the neighbourhood, were taken on by Anderson, to try their hands at a new kind of labour, many more lay about asleep on the moors, or gathered in knots to gossip, in the intervals of being worse employed.

No place could be obtained for Kay's boy, John, who pleased himself with looking about him while he had no business to do, and amusing himself as he best could. The less objection was made to this at home, as it was hoped that his curiosity might now and then make him forget the time, and justify his going without a meal—a consideration which was becoming of more and more importance in Kay's family. It happened that Bill Hookey, the shepherd-lad, was one day leaning against the door of a cutler's workshop, when his old companion, John, ran up, pushing back his hair from his hot forehead.

"I'd be glad to be as cool as you," said John, "standing gaping here. I have been at the forge: crept in when they did not see me, and got behind the bellows. I gave them such a puff when they were not expecting it,—I nearly got flogged. They let me off for blowing for them till there was no more breath in my body than in the empty bellows. But I don't half like standing here: come to the other side; you will see just as well."

Bill stuck out his legs colossus-fashion, and yawned again.

“ ‘Twas just where you are standing that Brett was when the grindstone flew ; and those grindstones make ugly splinters, I can tell you.”

“ I a’n’t afraid.”

“ No, because you’ve been in the moors all your days, and have not seen mishaps with grindstones and such. You should have seen Duncan. The knife he was grinding flew up, and it was a done thing before he knew what he was about. The cut was only across the wrist ; but the whole arm was perished, and good for nothing, just in that minute. The Duncans are all off to Scotland, with nothing to look to, after having had fine wages all this time—for he was a capital workman ; but, as Anderson says, we have too many folks out of work here already to be expected to keep a Scotchman. What accidents do happen to people, to be sure !”

“ Aye, they do.”

“ Then I wonder you put yourself in the way of one, when you would be quite safe by just crossing over.”

“ Oh ! grindstones very often don’t fly, nor knives either.”

“ But they very often do.”

“ He a’n’t afraid,” observed Bill, nodding towards the cutler.

“ No, because he is paid high for the risk. Well, I wonder any wages will tempt a man to have such a cough as that. I suppose, however, he don’t believe where it will end, as we do. I often think, if several were to take turns, and change their work about, there would be a better

chance. If ever I am a cutler, I will try that way, if I can get anybody else of the same mind."

"Not you," said Bill; "you will do like the people before you."

"Perhaps I may, when the time comes. I may no more like to try my hand at a new thing than you. Have you asked anybody for work whereabouts?"

"The flock is all sold, higher up the country," replied Bill. "They would not let me stay on the walk when the flock was gone."

"I know that; and how you got it into your head that you might go on sleeping in the hut just the same when the place was a field as when it was a sheep-walk. They say they had to take you neck and heels to turn you out, if you would not have the roof down over your head. Why did not you bestir yourself in time, and get work from Anderson, before others stepped before you?"

"There are no sheep now for anybody to keep."

"Well; if you have no mind to do anything but keep sheep, cannot you go higher up, among the graziers, and offer yourself?"

"I don't know anybody whereabouts, nor yet the walks."

"No, nor ever will, of your own accord," thought John. "What would you be now, Bill, if you might never be a shepherd again?"

Bill only rubbed his hand over the back of his head, and shifted his weight from both legs to one. Few things could daunt John's love of talk.

“ What became of the poor little lamb you were nursing that night that I was on the moors ? It was too tender, surely, to walk up into the hills with the rest.”

“ It be well if he be not dead by this time,” replied Bill. “ I carried him full two miles myself, and I told 'em how to feed him and when ; and, for all I could say, they minded no more when he complained—O, they don't understand him no more than if he was a puppy-dog. When I bid him good-bye, he looked up at me, though he could scarce speak to me. He did speak, though ; but he would not so much as look at the new shepherd, and if it was not for the ewe——”

“ What's coming ?” cried John, interrupting his companion's new loquacity. “ Let us go and see. I dare say it is somebody fresh taken up. Do you know, I went to see Chatham's jail, the other day. Father locked doors against me because I came home so late ; but I had a mind to see what sort of a place it was. I may be in it some day. I should not mind being anywhere that Chatham has been.”

“ You that can't stand being flogged !”

“ Chatham is not going to be flogged. They say it will be ‘ Death Recorded.’”

“ What's that ?”

“ Transportation.”

“ Why can't they say so at once ?”

“ I don't know : but they often speak in the same way. I have heard Chatham say that they talk of ‘ agriculture,’ and nobody means just the

same as they do by it. Some say 'tis farmers, and some say 'tis landlords, and some that 'tis having corn."

"I think it is keeping sheep."

"No, no; the Parliament does not meddle with keeping sheep. When they are asked to 'protect agriculture,' Chatham says, 'Anderson understands, 'take care of the farmer;'' and Mr. Fergusson, 'have an eye to the landlords,' and all the rest of us,—except you, you say,—'let us have corn.'

Bill yawned, and supposed it was all one. John being of a different opinion, and seeing that a very knowing personage of the village, who vouchsafed him a word or two on occasion, was flourishing a newspaper out of the window of the public-house, ran off to try whether the doubtful definition was likely to be mended by the wise men of the Cock and Gun.

He found that there was a grand piece of news going from mouth to mouth, and that everybody seemed much pleased at it. He did not know, when he had heard it, what it meant; but as the hand which held the newspaper shook very much, and two or three men waved their hats, and women came running from their doors, and even the little children clapped their hands and hugged one another, he had no doubt of its being a very fine piece of news indeed. Bill had slowly followed, and was now watching what John meant to do next.

"I don't believe they have heard it at the foundry yet," thought John. "I'll be the first to tell it them."

And off he ran, followed by Bill, and gradually gained upon by him. Now, Bill's legs were some inches longer than little John's, and, if he had the mind, there was no doubt he might be the first at the foundry to tell the news. This would have been very provoking, and the little runner put out all his strength, looking back fearfully over his shoulder, stumbling in consequence, and falling; rising as cold with the shock as he was warm when he fell, and running on again, rubbing his knee, and thinking how far he should be from hobbling like Bill, (with head hung back, bent knees, and dangling arms,) if he had Bill's capacity of limb. What Bill wanted was the heart to use his capacities. He soon gave over the race, even against his little friend John, first slackening his speed, and then contriving to miss the bustle both before and behind him by stopping to lean over a rail which looked convenient for a lounge.

John snapped his fingers triumphantly at the lazy shepherd-boy on reaching the foundry gate. He rushed in, disregarding all the usual decouums about obtaining entrance. Through the paved yard ran John, and into the huge vault where the furnaces were roaring, and where all the workmen looked so impish that it was no wonder he did not immediately discover his father among them. He nearly ran foul of one who was bearing a ladle of molten metal of a white heat, and set his foot on the exquisitely levelled sand-bed which was prepared to form the plate. Scolded on one side, jostled on another, the

'breathless boy could only ask eagerly for his father.

"Let go the lad's collar," cried one of the workmen to another, adding in a low voice, " 'Tis some mishap about his poor mother. Can't ye help him to find his father?"

Kay was roasting and fuming in the red glare of one of the furnaces when his boy's wide eyes looked up in his face, while he cried,

"There's such news, father! The greatest news there has been this many a day. There's an Order in Council, father; and the people are all about the Cock and Gun, and the newspaper is being read, and everybody coming out of their houses. Only think, father! It is certainly true. There is an Order in Council."

"An Order in Council! Well, what of that? What is the Order about?"

"About? O, they did not say what it is about,—at least, nobody that I heard speaking. But I'll run back and ask, directly."

"You will do no such thing. You would bring back only half your story. What should a child know about an Order in Council?" he asked of his fellow-workmen, who began to gather round. "Can't one of you go and learn what it is he means?—for I suppose some news is really come; and I can't leave the furnace just now."

John slunk away mortified to a corner where he could spread wet sand, in case any passing workman should be bountiful enough to spare him the brimmings of some overflowing ladle.

It was very odd that his father did not seem to understand his news when everybody, down to the very babies, seemed to be so glad of it at the Cock and Gun.

The messenger soon returned, and then the tidings produced all the effects that the veriest newsmonger could have desired. John ceased his sand-leverling to creep near and listen how there had been issued an Order in Council for opening the ports, and allowing the importation of foreign grain. There was a great buzz of voices, and that of the furnace was the loudest of all.

"Now you hear, lad," said one of the boy's tormentors. "The Order is for the importation of foreign grain."

"Just as if I did not know that half-an-hour ago," said John solemnly. "Why, I was at the Cock and Gun the minute after the news came."

And the lad rescued himself from the man's grasp; and went in search of some one else whom he might throw into a state of admiration. He met Mr. Oliver himself, saying,

"What is all this about? The people stand in the heat as if it was no more than a warm bath; and my work is spoiling all the time, I suppose."

"They are talking about the news, sir,—the great news that is just come."

"News? What news?"

"The King is going to unbar the forts, sir; and he allows the importation of foreign grain."

"It is high time he should. Your father and I have seen the importance you speak of, this long while."

"I'll warrant you have, sir. And now, perhaps, father will let me go and see it, if you speak a word to him."

Mr. Oliver laughed, and told him he would probably see more of it than he liked as he grew up. John thought he had rather not wait till then to see the sight; besides that he thought it hardly likely that the King should go on unlocking forts all that time. The fort that he could just remember to have seen, when his grandfather once took him a journey, might, he believed, be unlocked in five minutes. The young politician proceeded on his rounds, hoping to find a dull person here and there, who had rather go on with his castings, and be talked to, than flock with the rest round the main furnace.

"Well, good fellows," said Mr. Oliver, "what is your opinion of this news?"

"That it is good, sir, as far as it goes; and that it will be better, if it teaches some folks to make such laws as will not starve people first, and then have to be broken at last."

"The laws chop and change so that it seems to me overhard to punish a man for breaking them," observed another. "That law against buying corn when it is wanted is bad enough in the best times, as we can all tell; but if you want damning proof, look to the fact that they are obliged to contradict it upon occasion;—not once

only, but many times;—as often as it has wrought so well as to produce starvation.”

Kay thought, that putting out a little temporary law upon a great lasting one, was like sending a messenger after a kite,—which proves it ill-made and unlikely to sustain itself. Somebody wondered what Fergusson would think of the news.

“ What matters it to us what he thinks ?” answered another. “ He has stood too long between us and our food ;—not knowingly, perhaps ; but not the less certainly for that.”

Mr. Oliver wished that his men could talk over their own case without abusing their neighbours. He would not stand and hear a word against Mr. Fergusson on these premises.

“ Then let us say nothing about Mr. Fergusson, sir, for whom, as is due, I have a high respect. When I mentioned him, I meant him as the receiver of a very high rent ; and I maintain that if we make corn by manufacturing, with fire and water, what will buy corn, we are robbed if we have not bread. Deny that who can.”

And the speaker brandished his brawny arm, and thrust forward his shining face in the glowing light, to see if any one accepted his challenge. But all were of the same mind.

Mr. Oliver, however, observed that, though he had as little cause as any one to relish the disproportionate prosperity of the landlords in a time of general distress, he wished not to forget that they were brought up to look to their rent as he

to look to the returns of his capital, and his men to their wages.

“ That is the very thing I complain of,” said Kay ; “ that is, I complain of the amount of rent thus looked for. In as far as a landowner’s property is the natural fruit of his own and his ancestors’ labour and services,—or accidents of war and state, if you will,—let him have it and enjoy it, so long as it interferes with no other man’s property, held on as good a claim. But if by a piece of management this rent is increased out of another man’s funds, the increase is not ‘ property,’—I take it,—but stolen goods. If a man has a shopkeeping business, with the capital, left him, the whole is his property, as long as he deals fairly ; but if he uses any power he may have to prevent people buying of his neighbours, and thus puts any price he pleases upon his goods, do you mean to say that his customers may not get leave if they can to buy at other shops, without any remorse as to how the great shopkeeper may take such meddling with his ‘ property ?’ Give us a free trade in corn, and our landowners shall be heartily welcome to the best rents they can get. But, till that is done, we will not pretend to agree in making them a present of more of the fruits of our labour the more we want ourselves. The fruits of our labour are as much our property as their rents are theirs, to say the least ; and if it was anything but food that was in question we would not be long in proving it ; but food is just the thing we cannot do without, and we cannot hold out long enough to prove our point.”

"They will find it all out soon," replied Mr. Oliver. "Whatever is ruinous for many of us must be bad for all; and such men as Fergusson will see this before long."

"They will not see it, sir, till they feel it; and what a pass we must have come to before they will feel enough to give up a prejudice some hundred years old!"

"Before we can ask them to give up the point entirely, we must relieve them of some of the taxes which bear particularly upon them. Their great cry is about the weight of their taxation. They must first be relieved in that respect."

"With all my heart. Let them go free of taxation as great folks, in the same way that my wife and Mary are let off free at cards on Christmas night, because they are women. This was the case with the old French nobility, I have heard. They paid no taxes; and so let it be with our landowners, if they choose to accept the favour of having their burdens borne by the sweating people to whom they would not own themselves obliged in respect of money matters if they met in the churchyard, though the time may not be far off when they must lie side by side under the sod."

"Their pride must be pretty well humbled before they would accept of that kind of obligation. They had need go to church, in those days, to learn to bear the humiliation."

"Perhaps that is what they go to church for now, sir; for they are now taking much more from us than they would in the case I have mentioned. I don't say they all do it knowingly,—

nor half of them. There are many of our rich men who would be offended enough at being told, 'Your eldest son's bills at Eton were paid last year by contributions from three hedgers, and five brass-founders, and seven weavers, all of whom have families only half-fed.' 'Miss Isabella's beautiful bay mare was bought for her by the knife-grinder, who has gone to bed supperless, and the work-woman who will have no fire next winter, and the thirty little children who are kept from school that Miss Isabella's bay mare may be bought.' O yes ; there are many who are too proud to bear this being said to them, true though it be."

"They would call you a leveller, Kay, if they could hear you."

"Then I should beg leave to contradict them ; for a leveller I am not.—I have no objection on earth to young gentlemen going to Eton, or young ladies riding bay mares, if these things are paid for by the natural rent which a free trade in corn would leave. If we have that free trade, and workpeople still go to bed supperless and sit up without fire, still let young gentlemen go to Eton, and young ladies ride bay mares. In that case, the landlords will be absolved, and the hardship must go to the account of imprudence in some other quarter. O, I am no leveller ! Let the rich keep their estates, as long as they will let them find their own value in comparison with labour. It is the making and keeping up laws which make land of more and more value, and labour of less and less, that I complain of."

"But you did not really mean, Kay," said a bystander, "that you would let off every man that has land from paying taxes? It is the most unfair thing I ever heard of."

"It is unfair enough, but much less unfair and ruinous than the present plan. It is better worth our while to pay the landowners' taxes than to lose ten times the amount to enable the landowners to pay them; and that is what we are doing now."

"Ten times as much as the landlords pay in taxes?"

"Yes," replied Oliver. "We pay, as a nation, 12,500,000*l.* more for corn than we should pay if our ports were open to the world. Of this, not more than one-fifth goes into the pockets of the landowners, the rest being, for the most part, buried in poor soils. Now if the landlords pay one-half of this fifth in taxes, it is as much as their burden can be supposed to be. And now, which of you would not be glad to take his share of this one-tenth, to get rid of the other nine?"

"Every one of us would go down on his knees to pray the landlords to permit us to pay their taxes, if we could but tell how to get at the gentlemen."

"The landlords would need no such begging and praying, I trust," said Mr. Oliver, "if they saw the true state of the case. I hope and believe they would be in a hurry to surrender their other tenth, if they could see at what an expense to the people it was raised."

Some heartily believed it, but Kay asked why the landowners did not see the state of the case ; —a question which it was not easy to answer, unless it was that they did not attend to it. And why did they not attend to it ?—attend to it, not merely so far as to sanction an Order in Council for the admission of food when the people were on the brink of starvation, but so as to calculate justly how much corn we grow, how many of our people are properly fed upon that corn, how we may most cheaply get more corn, and—(but that is a matter beyond human calculation)—how many more busy and happy people might live within our borders if we and the other parts of the earth had free access to each other. If our rich men once attended to this large question, they would see what we see ; and seeing, they would surrender, and—”

“ And be far richer, as well as happier, than they are now. But, never fear ! They will feel soon ; and feeling helps seeing marvellously.”

“ It was found so in the case of the bounty on the exportation of corn. The landowning legislators thought they saw plainly enough, once upon a time, that it was a capital thing for all parties to give a present to every man who would sell corn abroad :—it would employ more hands in tillage than were employed before ; it would secure a supply in case of scarcity ; it would increase the value of landed property by causing the greatest possible quantity of land to be cultivated. This is what they saw in vision,—or rather through a pair of flawed spectacles. It ended in the labourers

producing only half as much wealth in a forced tillage as they might have made in manufactures, if food had been free; in exposing us to the danger of famine, as often as the deficiency of the crops exceeded what we sent out of the country, (no other nation being prepared to send us corn in a hurry, as if we were regular buyers;) and lastly, in sending a great deal of capital out of this country into others where living was cheaper. At first, no doubt, tillage was brisk, and some of the objects seemed to be answered: but this that I have described was the end. Then the landlords saw, for the first time, that, in giving the bounty to our corn-sellers, they had been offering a bribe to foreigners to buy our corn cheaper than we could afford to sell it. A pretty bargain for us! So that pair of flawed spectacles broke to pieces on being examined, and——”

“ And now they must break another pair before they will learn that they can see best with the eyes God gave them, if they will but put them to the right use. I am not for spectacles, unless there is something the matter with the eyes. And, in the same way, I am not for any man helping himself with the opinions of a class because he belongs to a class, unless he has such a faulty reason of his own that he would do worse if left to judge for himself. Let such of our landowners as are incompetent go on upholding the corn laws because their class has always done so; but let such of them as are men stand out, and judge for themselves, after looking the case plainly in the face. I am not afraid of

what their judgment would be, especially as some of the richest and wisest have done so already. Honour be upon them!"

The men were perhaps the more disposed to give honour where honour was due from their notion of the smallness of the number of land-owners in those days to whom they could award it. They gave three cheers to the Privy Council for having issued the present Order; and to the few landowners who advocated a free trade in corn. That done, they began to inquire what this order was to do for them, and found that it would just serve to avert the starvation of the people, now, and might probably lead to the ruin of a good many farmers within a few months; which ruin must be ascribed, should it arrive, not to the Order in Council, but to the previous state of things which it was designed to repair. Prices had been rising so rapidly from week to week since the quarterly average had been taken, that there was no saying how far even oats might be out of the reach of the poorer classes, before the next quarterly average could be struck, and prices be proved to have risen to the point at which the law authorized the importation of corn. To save the people from perishing while waiting for the quarter to come round, this order was issued without leave of parliament; and, as it would have the effect of lessening the general panic, in the first place, and also of bringing a large supply into the kingdom, the probability was that the farmers would find prices falling by spring-time, rapidly,—ruinously for them, calculating as they

had done on high prices continuing till next harvest; and laying their plans of expense accordingly.

But all this would be a fine thing for Oliver, would not it?

In as far as cheaper living was a good to him and his people, and in as far as more manufactures would be wanted to go abroad, it would be a benefit; but fluctuations in the fortunes of any class of society,—be they farmers or any body else,—are bad for the rest of society. For every farmer that is ruined, the manufacturing and commercial world suffers; and Mr. Oliver would rather therefore,—not only that corn had not been so dear as it now was,—but that it should not be so cheap as it might now soon be, unless its cheapness could be maintained. Fluctuations apart, the cheaper the better; but it was a strange and unhappy way of going on, first to ruin one class by high prices, and then to ruin another by low prices.

All this was allowed to be very true; yet the substantial fact remained, that the day of the manufacturer and mechanic was probably approaching, and that a season of cheap bread was in prospect, let what might follow in its train in the shape of disastrous consequence.

This was enough to proceed upon in rejoicing, and when the furnaces had been duly fed, by strong and willing hands, and a few plates cast amid more talking than was usual during so nice an operation, Oliver's day-men turned out like school-boys on a holiday morning, and tried

which could get first to the Cock and Gun. There they stood, regardless of the chill of the breeze after the heats of the foundry. How could they be sensible to it when they felt that the icy grasp of poverty on their heartstrings was relaxing, and the warm currents of hope had leave again to flow?

Kay was not one of the talkers at the public house. It was so long since he had had any pleasant news to carry home, that he was impatient to lose no time about it.

This was one of Mrs. Kay's dismal days. She seldom made any complaints; but there were times when the tears would run down her face for hours together, while there appeared to be no particular reason; and she sometimes said she could not account for it herself. On those occasions, she was not moody, or disposed to speak by signs rather than words, as was often her way; she would speak, and move about, and even try to laugh; but still the tears would run down, and she was obliged to give the matter up. Thus it was to-day, though Mary had not yet parted with the hope that, between them, they might stop the tears.

"Which way did John run?" asked Mary.
"Did you happen to see, sister?"

"Down by the coal wharf, I think," she replied, speaking rapidly. "O yes, it must have been by the coal wharf, because——No; it was not; that was yesterday. It could not have been to-day, because his father bade him go up the lane to gather acorns for the pig. That I should have

forgot it was yesterday he went to the wharf !
But that is always the way with my head. It is
so——”

“ It will be better when you have tried the
medicine from the dispensary a little longer.
What a kind, pleasant gentleman that is at the
dispensary ! He told me he really believed you
would be better directly, if——”

“ I shall never be better,—never,—head nor
heart, till I see these poor children of mine——
and my husband too——”

“ Well well : cheer up ! They will be better
fed soon, please God. Don’t let that trouble you
to night, when you feel yourself not strong.”

“ And there’s Chatham too. That lies at my
heart, Mary, more than you know. I must tell
you so, for you have been a kind sister to me
and mine.”

“ I should be sorry it should lie so heavy at
your heart,” said Mary, very quietly. “ I thank
you for him ; but you must not make yourself
unhappy about me. I am thinking your husband
will be home soon. The sun has been down some
good while.”

After a silence, she went on :—

“ You should have seen Betsy this morning,
how prettily she made the bed, though she could
scarce reach up to the bolster. Did you happen
to look how she set about it ?”

“ No. I have been thinking, Mary, how com-
pletely you and I are changed. It is not so long
since you used to check me for talking ; or ra-
ther, I used to check myself, seeing that you were

no talker. You used to say that people were not all made talkers alike ; and you went up and down, and about the house, just like a dumb person, and sometimes looking as dull too. And now—I say, Mary, when I don't answer you, you must not always think that I am thankless. And I know what it must cost you to be for ever saying something cheerful and pleasant, when Chatham is in gaol, and the cupboard is so often empty, and I such a poor, good-for-nothing—No, no ! Don't try to persuade me. I tell you I can't bear myself, and I don't ask you or any body to bear with me. Mercy ! now here's my husband ! and I in this condition."

" Heyday ! it is time I was coming home, I see," cried Kay, good humouredly, as he entered. " You too, Mary ! Well, dear, you have cause, so don't turn away ; I have only wondered to see none of this before ; but I have something for you both. Something we have not had this many a-day. Something better than ever was in this or any other physic bottle," he continued, shaking the dispensary phial and telling the news.

Mary had no sooner made herself mistress of it than she disappeared, probably to devise the means of getting the intelligence conveyed to her lover. As soon as she was gone, Kay drew a chair beside his wife, saying,—

" Now we are alone, Margaret, and times are like to change, so as to give one the heart to speak, I have something to say to you."

"O, no, don't," cried she, starting up. "I know what you are going to say."

"You do not;" and he obliged her to sit down. "Don't tremble so, for I am not going to find fault with you in any way."

"Then you ought. I am a poor, lost——"

"Not lost, Margaret. We have all near lost ourselves in such times as we have had of late; except indeed Mary, who will never lose herself, it is my opinion. It has come across me, Margaret, that I may have hurt you sometimes, without thinking, with light talk when you had not spirits for it, (not that I had real spirits, for that matter,) and with saying silly things to Mrs. Skipper, and the like. Ah! I see you felt it so; and it is no wonder you should. But you may take my word for it, I think nothing of Mrs. Skipper, nor ever did. Only, one is driven on, one does not know how, to behave foolishly when one is near desperate at heart."

"And that's my fault."

"Not altogether. No! not by any means. There were many things besides—besides one—to make me unwilling to look back to the time when we used to walk in Fergusson's oak copse, and say——Nay, Margaret, if you cannot hold up your head in thinking of that time, where should you rest it but upon your husband's shoulder, as you did then? How can you turn away so, as if I was your enemy? Well, I turned away too from the thought of those days, knowing, all the while, that it was a bad sign to turn away."

" And to think of all that has happened since ! Of all these children, and of my being such a bad mother——"

" It was the children I most wanted to speak about, especially John. But come, now, Margaret, open your mind to me, and don't be afraid. It was want and downright weakness that first led you into it. Was not it ?"

" O, it began long and long ago. When I was weakly as a girl, they used to give me things, and that was the beginning of it all. Then when I grew weakly again, it seemed to come most natural, especially because it was cheaper than bread, and the children wanted all we could get of that."

" So, often when you have pretended to have no appetite, it was for the children's sake and mine. Well, I half thought so all the time."

" No, not often ; only at the beginning. Afterwards it was true that I could not eat,—no, not if the king's dinner had been before me. I did try for long to get the better of the habit, and three times I thought I had ; but a sinking came, and I could not bear it. That was twice ; and the third time, it was your joking sharply about——But that was no reason. I don't mean to say it was. You don't know what the support is for the time, John, whatever comes after it. It raises one ; and yet I remember times—many times—when I knew I could not speak sensibly if you spoke to me, and yet I prayed and prayed that I might die before the morning light."

K

" Does that mean that you were less afraid of God than of me ? "

" No, I did not think of being afraid, exactly ; but I wanted to be out of your way and the children's ; and, for my own part, I should have been very glad to be at rest."

After a long pause, John resumed.

" You said you tried three times to leave it off. Do you think you could try again ? "

" No, John, I do not think I could."

" Not for my sake,—as you say I drove you into it last time ? Not for your own sake ? for nobody knows but ourselves, I dare say. I have never breathed it, and Mary——"

" O, Mary has vexed me many a time,—taking such pains, and having so many reasons and excuses with the neighbours. Why,—do you suppose I never met anybody ? And then there was the night that Mrs. Skipper, of all people in the world, gave me her arm. I was forced to take it, but——"

" Mrs. Skipper ! Really ! She never breathed a word. Depend upon it, she never told any body."

" If she did not, I am sure I have told plenty of people myself : so don't say any more about it, John."

" I was just going to say, that now is the time for trying. We are going to have better living, I hope, which is what you will want ; and I am sure Mary and I do not care what there is for us, if we could see you recover. If you will only

give us the word, we will watch and watch, night and day ; and you shall have all manner of help, and comfort, and no more thoughts of cruel joking, or of Mrs. Skipper. O, Margaret, try !"

" I am almost sure I cannot," muttered the poor woman ; " but I will just try."

" Ah ! do, and I should not wonder.—You talk of being at rest ; and it may be a rest in this very room,—on that very bed,—such as you little thought of when you wished your wish."

Margaret shook her head. " If I go on, I die ; if I leave off, I die ; it is all one."

" No, Margaret, it is not all one ; for I have one more thing to say,—and the chief thing. The children do not fully understand yet, though I have seen John wonder-struck lately, and his aunt could not put him off."

" Why should she ?"

" Just because neither she nor I choose that the children should grow used to see drunkenness before their eyes indifferently. I speak plain, because it is about those who cannot speak for themselves. Do you know now what I mean to say ?"

" Go on."

" I mean to say, (and to do it too,) that as often as I see you not yourself, I shall tell the children, not that their mother is ill, or low-spirited, or any thing else,—but what is really the case. Now, Margaret, how will you bear this ? Remember I shall really do it, from this day."

Margaret made no answer.

" You know I cannot let our children's morals

get corrupted at home, and them ruined for here and hereafter by such a habit as this. I cannot, Margaret."

" No ; you cannot."

" I am sure they have enough against them, at the best,—what with poverty, (temptation and no proper instruction,) and sometimes idleness, and sometimes over-work. They have enough before them at the best."

" They have."

" And who have they to look to but you and me ? except Mary, and she would not set against your example. It goes against my heart more than you know to say an unkind word to you, and always did, when I seemed cruel. But I can say what you will think cruel, and I must, unless you take my warning."

" You do not know—"

" Yes, I know, down to the bottom of my soul, what the misery was, and how many, many excuses there are for you. But the children do not know this, and there is no making them understand, and I must think of them first. If it was only myself, I think I could sit up with you all night, and shield you all day, and even indulge you with the very thing itself, when I saw you sinking for want of it. But, as it is, whatever I may do when the children are out of the way, I will do as I said when they are by."

" Do. I was not going to excuse myself when you stopped me just now,—but only to say you do not know how glad I should be to stop, if I could, though I shall never recover my head

again now. It will go on roaring like the sea as long as ever I live."

"No, no. With good food, you know——"

"I shall never relish food more; but I will try; and do you do as you said. I am not sure how I shall mind it in such a case; I never can tell any thing beforehand now. But you know your part; and if I fall back, you must all mind me as little as you can."

"Only, don't think me less tender to you, Margaret."

"No; O, no; you have given me warning, you know."

"Your poor head! how it beats! You had better let me carry you to bed; you are not fit to sit up. Better let me lay you on the bed."

"Well, I can't go walking. This is the sinking,—now."

"And enough there has been to sink you. There! I'll stay beside you. Where's your apron to hang up before your eyes? Now, don't think of any thing but sleep."

"O, but then I dream."

"Well! I shall be here to wake you, in case of your starting. Only just give me the key of the cupboard, and do not ask Mary for it any more when I am away."

CHAPTER VI.

TOO LATE.

ON a bright morning of the following May, the stroke of the wood-cutter's axe had resounded through Fergusson's woods from day-break till the sun was high. More than one fine young tree which had shaken off the gathered dews at the first greeting of the morning light, now lay prostrate, no more to be refreshed by midnight dews, no more to uprear its leafy top in the early sunshine. Such seemed to meet with little pity in their fall. The very men whose hands had felled them sat down on their horizontal trunks, and kicked the bark with their clownish heels, while they munched their bread and cheese. Children dropped into the green recess from all quarters, to pluck oak boughs and leaves from the fallen stem, wherewith to ornament their hats, and lead a procession to the neighbouring Whit Monday fair. These trees should have flourished twenty, fifty, seventy years longer, if the affairs of their owner had gone on in a steady and natural course. When Mr. Fergusson had walked round his plantations to see these oaks put into the ground, his thoughts had glanced forward to the time when his descendants might give a last mournful look at the doomed trees, towering stately before their fall; and now he was compelled himself to sentence them to the axe before they had attained nearly the fullness of their massive growth. Frequent and sudden losses during

the last few months, and the prospect of more had obliged Mr. Fergusson to collect all his resources, or surrender some of his domestic plans. He must sacrifice either a portion of his woods or the completion of the new buildings at the Abbey. His oaks must be felled, or his sons give up some of the advantages of education that he had promised them. It was found impossible to collect two-thirds of the rent due to him; and the condition of his farms foretold too plainly that further deficiencies would ensue. Poppies flourished more luxuriantly than ever this season among the thin-springing corn in Anderson's new fields. The sheep had returned to their old haunts, and could not be kept out by the untended walls and ricketty gates which reminded the passenger of the field of the slothful. When Mr. Fergusson was disposed to stop in his walks for purposes of meditation, he could hardly choose his station better than within sight of one of Anderson's enclosures when any rapacious sheep happened to covet what was within. It was a sight of monotony to behold one sheep after another follow the adventurous one, each in turn placing its fore-feet on the breach in the fence, bringing up its hind legs after it, looking around for an instant from the summit, and then making the plunge into the dry ditch, tufted with locks of wool. The process might have been more composing if the field had been another man's property, or if the flock had been making its way out instead of in; but the recollection of the scene of transit served to send the landowner to

sleep more than once, when occurring at the end of the train of anxious thoughts which had kept him awake. There was little sleepiness, however, in the tone with which he called his tenant to account for letting his property thus go to destruction. Mr. Fergusson was as near losing his temper as he ever was, when he pointed out to Anderson a ditch here that was choked up in one part and overflowing in another; a gate, whose stuffing of briars was proved a mockery by the meddling children who had unhooked it from its lower hinge, and the groping swine which enlarged the gap thus made; and the cattle-sheds, roofless and grass-grown, which should be either pulled down or repaired. Anderson's tone was also high, as he declared that a half-ruined man could not keep his farm in as thrifty a manner as a prosperous one; and that if, as soon as he began to improve the property he held, his funds melted away beneath the fluctuations of the corn-market, it was unreasonable to expect him to spend his capital in repairs till he should see whether government would or would not do something to protect agriculture from the consequences of vicissitude. Fergusson thought it useless to wait, on this ground. Government had been protecting agriculture for some hundreds of years, and yet fluctuations there had always been, and fluctuations there would always be, to judge by all experience. Anderson was not for this the less resolved to let his roofless cow-sheds and crumbling fences stand,—to be rebuilt if government should extend its protecting care,—to stand

as monuments, if agriculture should be neglected.

Monuments of what?—Anderson was a proud man, building for his own and his family's honour and glory when he was in prosperity, and finding something to be proud of in adversity;—Anderson would therefore have replied—'monuments of injury.' Injury from an act of government by which the starving were rescued from destitution, and the oppressed allowed one more chance of the redemption of their fortunes. That act which all other classes received as one of tardy justice,—of absolute necessity,—Anderson complained of as an act of injury to himself, so deep that he left certain wrecks of his property to serve as tokens to a future race of the wrongs he had suffered.

And the fortunes of Anderson *were* injured,—and injured by the acts of government, though not, as his wisest friends thought, so much by the permission of importation as by the preceding restrictions. They rightly called his wrecks and ruins monuments of his ill-luck in speculation, as their poorer neighbours called them monuments of the injustice done to the productive classes by encouraging or compelling the disadvantageous investment of capital. Both parties were right: but Anderson was induced to speculate by acts of protection which failed in the proof; and the disadvantageous application of capital, originating in the same acts, issued in disaster to all parties. If the interests of Anderson were placed in apparent or real temporary opposition to those of

his neighbours, the blame rested, not with him, but with the legislation which had interfered to derange the natural harmonies of social interests; which had impaired the loyalty and embittered the spirits of artizans, curtailed the usefulness and enjoyments of manufacturers, puffed up the farmer with the pride, first of ostentation and then of injury, and compelled the landowner to lay low his young woods before they had attained half their growth.

There was but little prospect of improvement in Anderson's affairs for a long time to come. There had been enormous importations of corn during the winter,—importations which in the end proved as ruinous to the corn-dealer as to the farmer at home. The bargain with foreign corn-growers having been made in a panic was agreed upon at a panic price. The foreigners had naturally laid heavy duties on corn, both because it was known how much the English wanted food, and because what they bought was not a surplus regularly grown for sale, but a part of the stock of the countries they bought of. In the midst of a panic, and in entire uncertainty how long the ports might be open, the corn importers could not possibly calculate how much would be wanted, any more than the people ascertain how much was brought in. While all were thus in the dark, prices fell in the home market, till wheat which sold at all sold at 50s. per quarter, and much was left which was not even bid for. The importer's foreign debts must, however, be paid. He was unwilling to ware-

house his wheat, because there was promise of a fine home harvest for this year, and the perishable nature of his commodity rendered it unwise for him to store it against some future contingency. The only thing for him to do, therefore, was to obtain a drawback on what he had imported, and to export it at a lower price than he had paid for it, pronouncing himself and every body else a fool that had entered upon so ruinous a branch of commerce.

This resource of exportation would fail in Anderson's case, if his harvest should prove never so flourishing. The high average price at home, caused by dependence on home growth, disables the home producer for competition in a foreign market, even if the uncertainty of a sale attending so irregular a commerce did not deter him from the attempt. A capricious demand abroad is the necessary consequence of alternate monopoly and relaxation at home; and when to this uncertainty is added the impediment of a higher average price, and the disadvantage of the known desire of the seller to sell, so small a chance of remuneration is left, that Anderson could not look with any confidence to this mode of disposing of the superabundance of his next crop. No great increase of demand at home was to be expected in the course of one season, as people cannot eat much more bread immediately because there happens to be a good supply, however certain an ultimate increase of demand may be, as the consequence of a single fruitful year. All that Anderson could look forward to, there-

fore, was waiting in hope of future temporary high prices, unless, indeed, all parties should grow so wise as to agree upon a freedom of trade which should secure permanent good profits to the farmers. Meantime, as capital invested in agricultural improvements is much less easily withdrawn and converted to other purposes than capital applied in manufactures, it was but too probable that the profits of Anderson's prosperous years were buried in useless drains and fences, and in stony soils, while he was burdened with an increased rent and a family now accustomed to a lavish expenditure. It was to be feared that more of Fergusson's young oaks must be brought low to supply the deficiencies of the tenant's half-yearly payments to his landlord.

The woodmen who sat on the fallen trunks thought little, while enjoying their meal and their joke, of all that was included in the fact of these trees having fallen.

Some talked of the work done and to be done this day. Others had thoughts at liberty for the fair to which so many persons within view were hastening; and yet others had eyes wherewith to look beyond the green slope where they were sitting, and to mark signs of the times in whatever they saw;—the whirling mill, with one or two additional powdered persons on the steps, or appearing at the windows;—the multiplication of the smokes of Sheffield;—the laden lighters below Kirkland's granaries;—Anderson's fields, waving green before the breeze;—sheep and cows grazing where there was to have been

corn ;—and, above all, Chatham taking his way to the accustomed quarry, in a very unaccustomed manner.

“ Do look at that fellow, walking as if he was mazed,” said Jack to Hal. “ He is not like one bound for the fair. He is on his way to work, seemingly ; but what a lagging step for one going to his work !”

“ Don’t you see ‘tis Chatham ?”

“ No more like Chatham than you. And yet it is,—yes,—that it is ! You may know by the way his arm is stuck in his side. But that is not the gait Chatham used to have.”

“ No, because he never took such a queer walk before. Don’t you know he has been between four walls all these many months, and has but just got out ? I have heard a man say that knew well, that the blue sky is a new sky when you have been shut out from it for a long while : and the grass seems really alive ; and as for such boughs as this that dance in the wind, you could almost think they were going to speak to you.”

“ Chatham seems to be fancying some such thing, he pays so little heed. If he is not going to pass without seeing us !—without once looking up into the wood ! His thoughts are all in the middle of the vale. I’ll step down, and have a chat with him.”

Before the last mouthful was stuffed into the mouth of the speaker, however, in preparation for descending to the road, livelier sounds than any that it was in his power to make, roused Chatham from his reverie. A train of little

boys and girls, who had disappeared a few minutes before, issued from the neighbouring sawpit, and from behind the piles of planks which lay around, their hats and bonnets stuck round with oak-leaves, and their procession of boughs arranged in boy and girl style. As each one scrambled out of the pit, there was a shout; as they ranged themselves, there was more shouting; and as they marched down the green slope on their way to the fair, there was the most shouting of all.

"I don't think Chatham seems to relish his walk so much as you thought for," said Jack to Hal. "He looks mighty melancholy."

"What! laughing at the brats. And look! he is nodding to one and another."

"Melancholy enough, for all that. For such a fine-made man, he is a hollow-faced, poor-looking fellow."

"Just now. When he has been three months at his work, you will see the difference."

"It is a lucky thing for him to have stepped into his work so naturally, as if he had only left it just from Saturday night till Monday morning. That is more than happens to many men who have been in prison. There was Joe Wilson never got the better of it, though he was only in a month. Not a stroke more of work did he get."

"Because his was for stealing, and nobody could trust him afterwards. In Chatham's case, no one thinks he did or meant any harm, considering what the pressure of the times was. And if the masters believed that he had really

broken the law, they would have had no objection to take him on again, in consideration of the cause, which they view as in some measure their own, against the farmers and landlords. Chatham is pretty sure of work at all times ; but if he had been the worst workman in all Yorkshire, he would have had plenty of masters courting him for having been punished for helping to bring in corn. It pleases him best, however, to be going back to his old perch, so as to get the matter dropped as soon as possible."

" Ay, ay, for more reasons than one."

" Not only for the sake of Mary Kay, but because the mischief that he wanted to set right is over. It cannot be said now that our people hereabouts want bread ; and so the sooner all ill-will is forgotten, the better. Hoy, oy ! how does your dame get you such a wedge of cold meat as that ? She must be a thrif tier body than mine."

" No thrift in the world served to get me cold meat six months ago ; but times have changed since ; and, as my wife says, it is mortal hard work I have to do here."

" Mortal hard work,—swinging your heels, and looking at people going to the fair ! Mine is as toilsome as yours, neighbour ; and yet I have only a lump of hard cheese with my bread, while droves and droves of bullocks and sheep are passing within sight to the fair, making one think of mottled beef and juicy mutton. I wonder when the day will come for the working man to

have his fill of meat, like him that does not work."

"Chatham will tell you the very day ;—when-ever this vale, and all our other vales, are portioned out for the purposes they are most fit for,—the choice parts for corn, and the meadows for pasture, and the heights for sheep-walks, and so on ; instead of our insisting on growing wheat at all costs, and so preventing our having as much meat and cheese and butter and milk as we should like. If we could get our corn where we please, we should soon find other food growing more plentiful."

"And a few things besides food. I suppose the Leeds men would take off all the wool we could grow ?"

"Yes ; and without bating an ounce of what they get already from abroad ; for where we get corn, there we must carry cloth, among other things."

"And then we must get more houses run up for our new weavers. By the way, if our landlords let more land to be built upon, that would fully make up for any difference from the fields being turned back into sheep-walks."

"And with a much better chance of the rents being paid regularly for ten years together ;—which is no small consideration to such men as Fergusson just now. There's Chatham walking away without speaking to one of us. Call him ; your voice is loudest. Well done ! You make the very cows turn and low at us. He won't come. How he points towards his work, as

much as to tell us we ought to be going to ours ! All in good time, friend Chatham. We have not been shut up for months, with our hands before us, like you."

"Nor yet been much busier than he, for that matter. 'Tis a pity this fair did not fall on our idle time. There go the folks in a train, while we are dawdling here——"

"Then don't let us dawdle. Off with you, children ! We are going to lop the branches, and you may chance to get an ugly cut if you don't keep clear of the hatchet. Come, neighbour."

"In a minute, neighbour. Bless us ! look at that monkey, down in the road ! How the creature dances, like any Christian ! And the music sounds prettily, does not it ? I am just like a child for wanting to be off to the fair. Who is that rogue of a boy plaguing the beast ? I think it is John Kay."

"Not it. John is in your predicament,—can't go to the fair till night. It does seem hard to keep so young a lad sweating among those furnaces all the week, and on a holyday especially ; but he is proud of being on full work, like a man, and left with the few in charge of the furnaces ; and they say his parents have comfort of him, in respect of his carrying home his wages."

"That is very well ; for they want all they can get, while that poor woman goes on pining as she does. She has got very feeble lately."

"And well she may, taking nothing stronger

than tea, after having lived so differently. She made the change suddenly too. 'Tis not six weeks since I saw her as bad as she ever was,— trying to reach home."

"Ay; after striving and striving all the winter to get the better of it, poor soul! But that falling back seemed to be the finishing of her. She has never held up her head since, nor ever will, in my opinion, though she has more reason to hold up her head than for these five years past; as they say her family are for ever trying to make her think."

"Poor Kay finds full work and cheap food come too late for him; for whatever fails to do his wife good brings little comfort to him. For all he used to do in the way of light words and silly fun, he has made a good husband; and no man can be more down-hearted than he is to see his wife in this way. No: that is not his boy John below. He would not let him be abroad plaguing monkeys when he may be called for any minute to see his mother die.—Bravo, boy, whoever you be! Little John Kay could not have done the thing more cleverly."

"There runs the monkey! Look ye! Through the gap! over the slope in no time! He will be up in the tree before they can catch him. Did you ever see man in such a passion as his master? I don't wonder, having got within a mile of the fair, and full late too."

"Ah! but you missed seeing how the lad slipped the chain the very moment the man beat the poor animal over the nose, Trust the beast

for running away at the first hint! A fine time it will take to get him back again!"

"Look at his red jacket, showing so unnatural on the tree top! Down he comes again. No, not he! it is only to get farther out on the branch."

"That is a marked tree that he is upon. Suppose we cut it down next. It joins no other, and monkey must come down with it or without it."

The harassed owner of the monkey received this proposal as a very bright thought. The monkey seemed to be of the same opinion, though not so fully approving of the idea. He chattered, screamed, whisked the skirts of his red coat, and clapped his paws together as he saw the workmen gathering round the tree with shouts, leaving neglected nice bits of food which monkey would fain have had the benefit of, and shaking their tools at him in token of what he had shortly to expect.

At the first shock, monkey became perfectly quiet, squatting with his fore paws clapped together, and looking down, like an amateur observer, on the progress of the work. In proportion as there was any movement below, he descended a little way, to look into the matter more closely, and then returned to his place on the fork of the branch. By the time it began to totter, a new ecstasy seemed to seize the beast. Again he mounted to the topmost bough that was strong enough to bear his weight; and when there, he again jabbered and screamed. Some

thought this was terror at his approaching downfall, and others took it for delight at seeing the circle divide to leave room for the tree to fall. The master, however, believed that he saw some object which excited him on the road, which was hidden by the trees from less exalted spectators.

The master was right. There was a crowd gathering at a short distance, as was shortly made known by the busy hum which came upon the ears of those who were standing among the trees on the slope. From end to end of England was such a tumult of many voices heard when the news arrived which caused the present assemblage. The agricultural districts took it very quietly, to be sure ; but the manufacturing towns and villages were all in a ferment throughout the island. Meetings were convened at the moment of the arrival of the newspapers ; and while manufacturers assembled in town halls, or addressed the people from the balconies of inn-windows, workmen of all classes met on the green, in the wood, about the public house, or wherever they could most numerously collect, for the purpose of declaring their opinions to the government.

The intelligence which caused all this bustle related to what the House of Commons had been doing and planning about the corn-laws—a House of Commons which had the year before barely managed to retain the confidence of the manufacturing classes by throwing out the suggestion of a Committee of its own, that the prices to which corn must arrive at home before importation was permitted should be very much raised.

A proposal like this, made at a time when the home price was at least 112s. per quarter, showed so determined an intention on the part of the proposers to render their country wholly self-dependent in the article of food, (*i. e.* to limit the population and wealth of the country to a certain bound, which should be agreeable to the landowners,) that the only chance the House of Commons had of preserving the allegiance of the bulk of the people was by rejecting the proposal; and the proposal had been accordingly rejected. The watchfulness of the people had not, however, been lulled. Their subsequent brief enjoyment of cheap food had strengthened their vigilance over the operations of the Commons' House; and they were the more intent as they knew that the landowners were suffering cruelly from the reduction of their rents and the deterioration of their estates; and that these landlords would probably attribute their losses to the late admission of foreign corn, rather than to the true cause,—the previous system of restriction. The event proved such vigilance to be very needful. The late fall of prices had disclosed an appalling prospect to the owners of land. They found that their extraordinary methods of legislation had exposed their country to a much more extensive dependence on foreign supplies than they had attempted to obviate, and that they had been working hard to reduce their own rents, and hurt their own estates, by the very means they had taken to enrich themselves. During such a remarkably fruitful season as the

present (the natural follower of several bad seasons) the supply would be so plentiful as to cause the poorer soils to be thrown back into pasture, the demand meantime increasing (as it had been for some time increasing) up to the maximum supply; so that on the first occurrence of a merely average season, the nation would be more dependent on a foreign supply than it had ever been before. Under this panic, the House voted a series of resolutions, declaring it expedient to let exportation alone, and to impose very high duties on importation. The news of the passing of these resolutions, and of the preparation of two bills founded upon them, was that which stirred up all England to remonstrance, and occasioned the Yorkshire graziers to leave their droves in the fair, and the corn-dealers to quit their resort in the market, to hear what would be said by the manufacturers who came forth from their desks, the artificers who poured in from the enjoyment of their holyday, and the country labourers who dropped down from among the hills, or converged to the point of meeting from the wide-spreading fields.

The day being warm and the road dusty, it was natural that the sounds of the wood-cutters' labour should suggest to the gathering crowd the idea of meeting on the grass, in the outskirts of Fergusson's wood. Mr. Fergusson and his sons were found in the fair, and they gave permission, and promised to come presently and hear what was going on. Chatham was met on the road, just about to turn up towards the quarry; but

he was easily persuaded to go back and help ; and the whole party was approaching when Monkey offered them his uncouth welcome from the top of the tree.

This tree was left slanting to its fall when the people began to pour in from the road, and to possess themselves of the trunks which lay about, in order to pile them into a sort of hustings. The organ-man could find no one to assist him in catching his monkey, in case the rogue should vouchsafe to descend from his high place. Nobody could attend to the monkey now ; and if he chose to run off from one side of the tree while his master was at the other, and lead the chase as far as Sheffield, he might, for any thing the woodmen seemed to care, Flinging down their tools, or resting them against their shoulders, they threw themselves along on the carpet of wild anemones which stretched beneath the trees ; while the more restless mechanics flitted about among the stems, looking, with their smutted faces and leatheren aprons, very unnatural inhabitants of such a place. Long after Chatham and others began to enlarge upon the matter which had brought them together, the frowning brows and eager gesticulations of these men, as they talked low with one another, showed that they had their own thoughts, and were not met merely to have notions put into their heads.

“ Is it possible to mistake what these men are thinking and feeling ? ” asked Chatham of Mr. Fergusson. “ If the House of Commons could for once take their sitting here, with the Speaker on

yon bit of grey rock, and the members on these trunks or on the flowery ground, like the Indians when they hold a council, they would legislate for these listeners after another fashion than they now do."

" Why so ? I see, as well as you, that these men are thinking and feeling strongly ; but are they thinking that which should change the policy of a nation ?"

" That which will change the policy of a nation, though not so soon as if the National Council could for once come here to legislate. Friends !" he said to some near him, whose sudden silence called the attention of others beyond them,—“ I am telling this gentleman that I believe there is one thought in the minds of us all, though that thought might be spoken in many ways. One might say, that he felt himself injured by the high price of bread last year, and another by the falling off of work—one might point to the grave of his spirit-broken brother, and another hold up before us his pining child—one might be angry with our masters for altering our wages, so that we never know what to depend upon, and another may be grieved that Anderson should have sharpened his speech, and that Mr. Fergusson should come among us with so grave a countenance as this ; but there is one plain thought at the bottom of all this,—that the prime necessary of life is the last thing that should be taxed. I should not wonder if Mr. Fergusson himself agrees with us there."

“ It depends upon what the object of the tax

is," replied Mr. Fergusson. " If the corn-tax be laid on to swell the revenue of the state, I grant that it is the very worst that could be imposed; because, while it presses so heavily on all as to cramp immeasurably the resources of the nation, it presses most on those who have little but the prime necessary of life, and the harder in proportion as they possess little else."

" In what case will you then justify a corn-tax?"

" When it is laid on to balance an excess of taxes laid on the agriculturists over those laid on other classes."

A confusion of voices here arose, in cries of—

" We will take them on ourselves!"

" You and yours shall live duty-free, if you give us corn free."

" We pay your taxes many times over already."

" I will work one day in the week for you for nothing but a free corn trade."

" I will give you a share of my wages every Saturday night, and my vote, if you'll go up to Parliament, and speak our minds there."

And many a black hand was held out to see if Mr. Fergusson would say " Done." He did not quite say this, but he went on,—

" I am sure I can have no objection to a change in our system; for I have suffered as well as you."

" Ay, and you would make it up by having corn dearer than ever," cried one of the discontented.

" No, I would not, because I am convinced

that this would only bring on a repetition of the same evils some time hence, and in an aggravated form. I dread, as much as you can do, further fluctuations of this kind, which have injured us all in turn. More bad seasons followed by plenty, with a fickle legislation, and those of you who have pined will die; the masters who have ceased to be rich will be ruined; the farmers who have now buried some of their capital will find that they have got back a part only to lose the whole; and, as for me and mine, I should expect the gates that are now unhinged to be broken up for fuel, and the stones of my crumbling fences to be used for knocking me off my horse. If in those days I should go abroad, it would be to rescue my life from your rage, and not, as now, to economise the income which I can no longer spend among you. No, no; we must have no more mismanagement like that which has well nigh ruined us all."

"What does he mean? Where is he going? Won't he live at the Abbey any more?" were the questions which went round, and caught Mr. Fergusson's ear.

"I told you," he said, "that we had all suffered in turn, though I am far from pretending that we have suffered equally. I assure you that I spend many an anxious day, and many a sleepless night, in planning how I may fulfil all my engagements as a member of society, and keep my promises to my children. These engagements were made when I was prosperous; and now I am no longer prosperous. My steward

comes to me every quarter-day with a smaller handful of receipts, and a longer bill of arrears; and wherever I turn, I see with my own eyes, and find many comforters to tell me, that my property is wasting for want of care, and that I must sustain great losses hereafter for want of a small expenditure which cannot be afforded now. If I or my tenants could just spare a hundred pounds here, and fifty there, and two hundred somewhere else, it would save me a thousand or two that will have to be spent at last. But it cannot be done. My sons are entering upon a new stage of a very expensive but necessary education ; and though my daughters have given up their usual journey to London, I have no hundreds to spare. My tenants cannot scrape their rent together, and it is folly to ask them for their fifties."

" The papers say you have lowered your rents."

" It is true that I have ; and I am sorry the papers take upon themselves to praise me for it as for an act of generosity. You all know now that I cannot get my full rents, so that I do not in fact give up any thing that I might have ; and I consider it no more than justice to reduce the claims which I made when the farmers were in very different circumstances from those in which they are at present placed. I have no objection to the newspapers stating the fact, because it may lead others to follow my example, and may afford a useful lesson to all ; but I do object to the act being lauded as one of generosity, as

much as I should to the House of Commons being praised for giving up the bills now in question, in case the whole nation should prove to be of your mind about them."

"Very fair! very good! Spoken like one of the people!"

"I am one of the people,—taxed as one of the people, I assure you," continued Mr. Fergusson. "You offer,—very sincerely, I have no doubt,—to take the taxes of the landowners upon yourselves, in return for a free trade in corn. But you know perfectly well that such an arrangement cannot be made, even if we chose to accept your kind offer."

"Why not? What prevents, if we are all of a mind?"

Chatham thought that it would take so long to bring all people into one mind on the point that it would be a quicker and probably equally good method to allow such a duty on imported corn as would cover the landlords' peculiar liabilities. A small duty,—at the most 5s. or 6s. per quarter,—would be found sufficient, he believed, at the beginning; and such a duty as this would not materially impede importation. Under such a system of regular supply, pauperism would decrease, or ought to decrease, year by year; this would lessen the burdens of the agriculturist, and open the way for a further reduction of the duty, which should expire when that equalization of taxation should take place which must arrive as nations grow wiser.

"Without committing myself as to the amount

of duty," replied Mr. Fergusson, " I may say that I should not object to some such plan as Chatham proposes: and I would insist that the duty should, above all things, be fixed. If a duty is imposed on the basis of the distresses of the country, it may be right enough that it should be graduated, the duty lessening as prices rise: but in the case of such a duty as Chatham advocates,—a mere set-off against our excess of taxation,—it should be so far fixed as that every one might know beforehand how it would operate, and all classes be able to make their calculations."

" Why, yes," said Chatham. " If any corn-tax is, generally speaking, bad, none can be so bad as one that makes twice as much uncertainty as there is occasion for. To impose a duty on the basis, as you say, sir, of the distresses of the country, seems an odd way of raising money for the state; and to make such a duty a gambling matter seems to me more odd still. In the case of such a graduated duty as you speak of, falling as home prices rise, the corn-dealer's business becomes an affair of gambling speculation. He sends for corn when wheat is at one price, and brings it in when wheat is at another. If the price has fallen, he has so much more duty to pay that the speculation may ruin him. If the price has risen, he may make enormous profits that he did not expect. I may say this much for the corn-dealer, as Kirkland is not here to speak for himself, that he had much rather pay a constant duty which would leave him no uncertainties to manage."

but the supplies of corn at home and abroad, than take the chance of enormous occasional profits at the risk of ruinous occasional loss."

" Ay, Chatham : there you come to a very important part of the question,—the uncertainty of supply. If you can answer for our having a regular and unfailing supply of food from abroad, when we have too little for our people at home, you can answer for more than the House of Commons can ; for they adopt as their principle the safety of lessening our dependence on foreign countries for food."

" When they can answer for our having a regular and constantly increasing supply at home," replied Chatham, " I may perhaps yield the question to them. When you can find any member of their committee who will tell me, at any seed-time, what will be the produce of an average sowing, I will consent to his making the nation depend on that produce. When you can bring me proof that the rich harvests of one district are not of use in repairing the deficiencies of a less favoured district, I will own it to be as safe to depend for supply on our own little island as on the collective corn districts of the globe. When you can convince me that we buy as advantageously by fits and starts as under a system of regular commerce, I will grant that regularly importing countries have not the steadiest market."

A listener observed that Kirkland had lately said, in reference to his having had to hunt up corn abroad during the scarcity, that there was a

difference of ten per cent. between "Will you sell?" and "Will you buy?"

"Kirkland learned that saying from a greater man than any of us," observed Mr. Fergusson. "It was Franklin who said that true saying. But there are other uncertainties to be considered, besides the variations of the seasons. Clouds gather over men's tempers as well as over the face of the sky. Tempests of passion sweep away the fruits sown between nations in a season of promise. Springs of kindness are dried up, as well as fountains of waters. We have not considered the risks of war."

"Indeed but we have, sir," replied Chatham, "and we come to the conclusion that when we are at war with all the nations whom God has blessed with his sunshine and his rain, we shall not deserve to touch God's bounties, and it will be high time that we should be starved off God's earth. If we wanted to restrict our own trade, sir, instead of throwing it open,—if we wanted to forbid our merchants buying of more than one or two countries, we might believe that war would bring starvation; but never while our ships may touch at all ports that look out upon the seas."

"We do not grow half our own hemp," said a man with a coil of tow about his waist. "Has the British navy ever wanted for ropes? If our enemies at sea ever meant to hurt us, their readiest way would have been to stint us in cordage; and, since they have not done it during all this war, it must be, I take it, because they can't."

"Certainly," replied Chatham. "In cases

like these, Mr. Fergusson, our conclusions about the choice of an evil or a danger must be compounded of the greatness and of the degree of probability. Now here is, under the old restrictive system, a vast amount of certain evil, which you and the House of Commons seem to think little of, in comparison with a much greater evil which it is barely within the line of possibility to happen. Here are present labourers who have had their spirits bowed and their bodies worn by want, and who can look out from this green to the spot where their kindred are laid under the sod, mown down by this sharp law like meadow flowers under the scythe. Here are present the gentle who have been made fierce, the once loyal who were made rebels,—ay, and the proudly innocent who have been disgraced by captivity——”

While Chatham stopped for breath, one and another cried out to Mr. Fergusson,

“ If you think us rude in our speech to you, sir, you may lay it to the bread-tax.” “ Get the bread-tax taken off, and you will hear no more of the midnight drill.” “ Masters and men never would have quarrelled, sir, but for the bread-tax.”

“ From this place, you may see,” Chatham went on, “ not only poppies coming up instead of wheat, and stones strewed where lambs should have been browsing, but hovels with mouldering thatch where there should have been slated houses, and a waste wilderness stretching beyond where there might have been the abodes of thousands of busy, prosperous beings; and all through the pressure of restrictive law.”

“ And where there is not a waste, there will soon be a deserted mansion,” added Mr. Fergusson. “ I told you I was going away. My sons must finish their education abroad ; and we all go together, that we may live within our means in a manner that we could not do at home. This is one consequence of the late fluctuations——”

“ I can tell you, sir,” said Oliver, showing himself from behind a knot of his own men,— “ I can tell you another consequence that would have happened if the late fluctuation had not taken place. If prices had not fallen, and fallen just when they did, I must have gone abroad to live, where I might work to some purpose,— where my capital might have been employed in producing wealth, instead of being given to my workmen to buy dear food. Moreover, if prices now rise again so as to make you change your mind and stay, I must go ; so it comes just to the question, which of us can best be spared ?”

“ If it comes to that,” replied Mr. Fergusson, “ it is clear that I can best be spared. Without saying anything about our respective characters and influence, it is plain that it signifies much less where I spend my revenue, than whether you invest your capital at home or abroad. If it must come to this, I am the one to go.”

“ And what but a bad state of the law could have brought the matter to this point ?” said Chatham. “ What greater curse need a nation have than a legislation which condemns either the rent-receiver or the capitalist to banishment ?”

Oliver's men proceeded to agree in whispers that he was not in earnest about going abroad ; that it was only said to make the landlord wonder, and put the question in a strong light. A man must suffer much and long before he would leave his own land, and the workmen that were used to his ways, and all that he had ever been accustomed to.

"True," said Oliver, overhearing their remarks ; " and I have suffered much and long. It is true that banishment is the last attempt that many a man will make to improve his fortunes ; but it is an attempt which must and will be made, if the fortunes of our manufacturers continue to decline. I know all that you can tell me about the hardship to the workmen who are left behind to be soon driven into the workhouse. I feel how I should grieve to turn you all off, and shut up my foundry ; but it is one of the natural consequences of a legislation like that which we have lived under. If our manufactures remain unsold on account of the cost of feeding the labourers, it is certain that the manufacturers will carry their capital,—the subsistence-fund of the people,—to some cheaper land."

And how much was it supposed that the price of wheat would fall if the ports were opened ? was the question proposed by the workmen, in their alarm at the idea of manufacturing capital being forced out of the country.

Six, seven, eight, or, at most, nine shillings, was the utmost fall, on the average of the last ten

years, anticipated by Chatham, Oliver, and Fergusson,—a fall which, accompanied as it would be with regularity of supply, and freedom from panic and from the intolerable sense of oppression, would prove an all-important relief to the manufacturer and artisan, without doing the landlord and farmer any injury. Such a fall as this would drive out of cultivation none but the poorest soils, which ought never to have passed under the plough ; there would be an end of the farmer's sufferings from vicissitude ; and the small reduction of the landlords' rents would be much more than compensated by the advantages which must accrue to them from the growth of a thriving population within their borders.

Chatham observed that many might object to the estimate just given of the probable fall of price on opening the ports,—and it was indeed a matter which required large observation and close calculation ; but he, for one, was not disposed to rest the question on probabilities of this nature, but rather on the dilemma,—“ If the price of corn is heightened by a restrictive system, why should the nation be taxed for the sake of the landlords ? if not,—why do the landlords fear a free trade in corn ?”

“ There is yet another consideration,” observed Mr. Fergusson, “ and a very important one, Chatham. You have said nothing of Ireland, while the fact is that Ireland sends us three times as much corn as she sent us ten years ago. There seems no reason why so fertile a country should not supply us with more and more till our prices

fall the nine shillings per quarter we were talking, and even till we are able to export. What do you say to this?"

"That it is owing to the establishment of a free trade in corn between us and Ireland that we employ so much more than formerly of her industry, and enjoy so much more of its fruits. What has been proved so great a good in the experiment with one country, is the finest possible encouragement to extend the system to all. If you object, as I see you are ready to do, that this success with respect to Ireland renders a further emancipation of the trade unnecessary, I answer, that the corn-laws are by the same rule unnecessary, —an unnecessary mockery and irritation of the people. If they are not yet unnecessary because Ireland does not yet fully supply us,—in exact proportion as they are not unnecessary, they are hurtful. From this dilemma, Mr. Fergusson, you cannot escape, and you had best help us to press it upon the House of Commons. If you will join us, sir, in drawing up our address to Parliament on the principles we have been arguing about for this hour past, I rather think we ourselves may find, and may help to show the House, that landowners and their neighbours have the same interests, and are willing to be all happy together, if the legislature will let them. Whenever we see a wealthy and wise landowner taking up the question on its broad principles, and addressing the legislature, whether from his seat in the Lords or by petition to the Commons, as a citizen rather than as one of a protected class, I

shall feel a joyful confidence that these broad principles will soon be recognized and acted upon by the loftiest members of the state."

"It is time," replied a voice from below, "for they have long been forced upon the lowliest."

"This is one of the deep things that is better understood by many an one that has never learned his letters than by some who are boasted of for their scholarship," observed another. "Wakeful nights and days of hardship drive some truths deep and firm into the minds of the veriest fool, which the wise man, in his luxury, finds it difficult to learn."

"You say truly enough that it is time," said a third, with sternness in his look and tone. "The charity comes too late which sticks bread between the teeth of a famished man; and the justice we seek will be a mockery if it does not come in time to prevent another such season of misery as we have endured, and as they threaten us with again. Yet they talk of playing the same game over again. Come, Chatham, make haste down, and draw up what we are to say, and let us sign before the sun goes down. We have not an hour to lose."

"Not an hour to lose, as you say, neighbour, when for many it is already too late. Mend the system as fast as you will, there is many and many a home where there will never be comfort more."

Several who were present knew that Chatham must be thinking of Kay's family when he said these words. He went on,

“ You might as well hope to close up the clefts of yonder ash, and to make it rich with growing grafts, struck as it was by last year’s lightning, as to heal the spirit of a man whose fortunes have been blighted by the curse of partial laws, and to repair his wrongs. For him it is too late. He stands the monument of social tyranny till his last hour of decay. For him it is too late ; but not yet for others. There are thousands yet in infancy,—millions yet to be born whose lot depends on what is done with the corn-laws in our day.”

“ Mine and that of my descendants does,” observed Oliver ; “ though, in one sense, it is also too late for me. I have lost my place in the market abroad ; and for this my work-people are suffering and will suffer. But let no chance of recovery be lost through our delay. Come, Chatham ; let us be gone, and give the people the opportunity of declaring their wishes before they disperse, and fancy that, because dispersed, they have no power. Let every man raise his voice so that the legislature may understand.”

All present were so eager to do this that no leisure seemed to be left for the follies which usually lurk in some corners of all popular assemblies, from the largest to the smallest. No monkey tricks were played by any but the monkey, though country clowns and many boys were present. When the animal, after being well nigh given up in despair by his irritated master, made a sudden descent on the head and shoulders of a listener, he was very quietly delivered over to his

owner to receive the chastisement which was prepared for him, and which no one troubled himself to turn round to witness. All were too busy watching Chatham writing with a pencil, and on paper furnished by Mr. Fergusson, who sat beside him on his woodland seat, now agreeing, now dissenting, but in no case desiring to hinder the full execution of the object for which his neighbours were assembled.

When a short petition to the Commons' House against the imposition of further restrictions on the foreign corn-trade had been drawn up, and fully agreed to by a large majority, it was carried away with all expedition to be copied and signed while the fair was yet thronged ; and the wood was found by the noonday sun nearly as quiet as when visited by the midnight moon ;—as nearly so as the blackbird and the linnet would permit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BREAKING UP.

KAY was indeed one of the many to whom a temporary relief from the bread-tax came too late. Five years before, no man could be found more eager in the statement of his case of hardship : five months before, he had still some hope that a perpetuation of the then ample supply of food

might yet avail to restore his domestic peace. His wife might struggle through her difficulties, and be once more a mother to his children, and in aspect and mind something like the woman he married. Now, however, all hope of this was over, and Kay had had no heart to attend the meeting in the wood, or to mix with his former companions more than could not be avoided. He went straight from the foundry to the side of his wife's chair, as long as she was able to sit up, and to nurse her when she at length took to her bed. He owed her the exemplary attention she received from him ; for the same poverty which had seduced her into a fatal habit had embittered his temper, and they had need of mutual forgiveness. Since the noble effort each had made,—he to warn his children against her example, and she to break away from the indulgence which had become necessary,—neither had sinned against the other. No rough word was heard from his lips, and self-denial, by Mary's help, never failed. Mrs. Kay sank slowly and very painfully. She well knew that she must sink, either way, and to this she had no objection ; but often and often, in the solitude of her daily sufferings and the restlessness of her nightly dozings, she thought that every body was hard upon her ; that they might have let her sink a little more rapidly, and give her what she longed for. They did not seem to feel for her as she thought they might, or they would indulge her without letting the children perceive it. Mary must

know sometimes, when she saw her very low, what it must be that she wanted ; but instead of taking any notice, she only began to talk about any thing that would win away her mind for a while. Then all these secret complainings were thrust away as if they were suggestions of the devil, and a throng of reproachful recollections would come,—of her husband's patience in smoothing her pillow twenty times in a night, and holding her head for hours when her startings had frightened her ; and of Mary's never seeming tired, with all that was upon her, or saying a word about what she gave up for her in keeping Chatham waiting so long. She knew that it was only on her account that they were not married yet, and she hoped she should soon be under the sod, and no hinderance to any body ; meanwhile, nobody but she would perceive, so much as Mary had to say now, and so cheerfully as she spoke, that she was giving up any thing for a sister who had deserved so little from her.

Mrs. Kay expressed all this so fully and forcibly to her husband one day, that he told Mary he really believed it would make all parties happier if she would marry Chatham at once. The affair was soon settled, and every body concerned was so evidently satisfied, that very few neighbours ventured to pronounce above their breath how shocking it was to marry from a house where there must soon be a death.

Mrs. Skipper, who had throughout been profuse of neighbourly attentions, came to sit with

Mrs. Kay while the party were gone to church on the Sunday morning when the marriage took place. She was far from being the most considerate and judicious of nurses ; but Mrs. Kay did not seem so alive to this as her husband and Mary, and appeared to like that she should occasionally supply their place. This morning she showed herself with eyes more red and swollen than a nurse should ever exhibit. Mrs. Kay directly perceived this.

“ O dear, Mrs. Skipper, what has happened to you ? I am sure some misfortune has happened. Tell me ! Tell us at once.”

“ Why, love, 'tis no misfortune of mine particularly, but every body's misfortune.”

“ Why, that is worse still ! Nothing has come in the way of the wedding ?” And she tried to start up in her bed.

“ Bless you, no ! Lie still. The wedding is likely to go on well enough ; and in my opinion it is high time they were off to church. No, no. It is only that the Fergussons are gone.”

“ Gone !” cried every voice in the house.

“ Yes. Just slipped away quietly on a Sunday morning, when nobody was suspecting, that they might not have their hearts half broke, I suppose ——” —A loud sob stopped the good woman's utterance.

“ Well, I am sure, Mrs. Skipper, it gives us all much concern,” said Kay. “ They are good people,—the Fergussons,—and of great consequence to all the people about them : and it will

e a sad thing to see the Abbey shut up, and the grounds left to themselves. It is not the less melancholy for our having looked forward to it this long while."

"Why no, but rather the more," said Chatham, "because we know what misfortune sent them away. When the wind has torn the linnets' nest, we know that they will fly away; and the wood will miss them the more, and not the less, for the fear that they will not venture to build in the same place again."

"And 'tis six years, come Michaelmas," said Mrs. Skipper, "that they have had hot bread from me every morning, except while they were just gone to London. They have been the best customers that ever I had, and now there is no knowing—They looked very grave, every one of them that I could see, as they whisked past. I wonder whether they saw how I cried. I hope they did. I am sure I don't care who saw, for I am not ashamed of being sorry for such as they."

"I thought they would have stayed till harvest," said Mary. "Such a beautiful harvest as it will be this year. I have been telling my sister, Mrs. Skipper, what a fine promising season it is. John and I shall manage a better gleaning this year."

"Why, yes, Mrs. Kay," observed the widow, "I could not help thinking, when I saw the sun shining, and the fields waving, and the people all abroad in their best, that it is hard upon you to be lying here, so dull, when you have not

seen a green field, nor a number of people, for I don't know when. Well, I must tell you all about it, instead, when they are gone. Now, Mary, what are you going in that way for, as grave as a quaker, and more so than the quaker I saw married once ? I know you have a gown more fit to be married in than that. Go and put it on in a minute,—your light green one, I mean, and I will lend you my pink handkerchief. I will step for it, and bring it before you have got your gown on. And you shall have this cap,—the ribbon is pink, you see ; and my other better one will do just as well for me. Come ! Make haste !"

Such was not Mary's will, however ; and as her brother declared it quite time to be gone, she proceeded at once to the altar in her dark-coloured gown, thus leaving a fruitful topic for Mrs. Skipper to enlarge upon to her patient, as soon as the party had closed the door behind them. Before they went out, Mary offered a smiling hint to the widow not to cry any more about the Fergussons, or any thing else, if she could help it, while they were away ; and to keep her charge as cheerful, if she could, as she had been for the last few hours ; hours of more ease than she had known for some time past.

On their return, they found Mrs. Skipper,—not crying,—but in great trouble,—in far too deep a trouble for tears. She was leaning over the bed, looking aghast, when Chatham and Mary entered, arm in arm, with Kay and his two elder children following.

"Why, Mrs. Skipper, what have you been doing to my wife?" cried Kay, seeing that the sick woman's eyes were fixed, and her whole countenance quite different from what he had ever seen it before.

"Nothing, Mr. Kay; but I thought you never would have come back. She took such a strange way the minute you were gone, I had the greatest mind to call you back."

"I wish you had," said Mary, who had already thrown off her bonnet, and was chafing the cold bands that lay helpless on the bed clothes.

"Ah! she has changed much within a few minutes too. Her hand lies still now; but I had to put it down several times. She kept stretching it out as if she thought to reach something; and I supposed she was thirsty, but——"

A mournful shake of the head from Kay stopped her. He said she had often done this when she was not quite herself.

"Yes: often and often," said Mary; "and I have seen her as bad as this before. Look, she is coming about. She sees us now."

"If she be not trying to speak!" whispered Mrs. Skipper.

Mrs. Kay spoke, but she was wandering. She told Mary that next Sunday should be the day for Chatham and her to be married, as she herself should be buried out of their way by that time. Then perceiving Chatham, she tried to give him some advice incoherently, and far too painfully to be ever referred to after that day by any of them, about not letting his wife come to

poverty,—extreme poverty; and about distrusting her in such a case, if she were an angel from heaven.

“ For God’s sake stop her !” cried Kay, taking a sudden turn through the room ; and Mary stopped her by a kiss, though her own tears were dropping like rain. Mrs. Kay proceeded with her self-accusations, however, as long as she could speak at all ; and the awe-struck children were taken out of the room by Chatham.

“ No, no !” said Mary, whispering her emphatic contradictions into the ear of the dying woman, as soon as she could command her voice. “ You have done the noblest—you have gone through the hardest trial—God will not forget your struggles as you forget them yourself. Your children shall never forget them. Well, well. It was suffering,—it was hunger that did all that ! Don’t dwell upon that ! All that was over long ago ; and now the pain is over,—just over ; and we know what the promises are. If we deserved them as well—”

“ Bless you ! Bless you, Mary !” cried the husband, in a broken voice.

But the painful impression of his wife’s words remained as strong as ever when the restless eyes were finally closed, and a faint smile rested on the lips whence the breath had departed. John was terrified by his father’s manner of fetching him into the room, and saying, as he showed him the corpse.

“ You heard her say that she had been wicked. You heard her say—but never mind all

that. You will not know for this many a year how noble a woman your mother was, and what she did for your sake. And if I ever hear you say a word,—if I see you give the least look against her—”

John slunk away as Mary took her brother's arm, and led him beside Chatham, while she hung up a curtain before the bed, and made Mrs. Skipper somewhat ashamed of being so much less able to exert herself than the nearer connexions of the dead. The widow presently slipped out to consult with her neighbours on the necessary arrangements, and to express the most vehement admiration for the departed, while preserving the strictest honour respecting the particulars of the closing scene.

Since that day, the curse of the bread-tax has alighted again and again on that busy vale. Again has the landowner had the painful choice of sinking from his rank at home or going abroad to preserve it. Again has the farmer found himself, now marvellously rich, and now unaccountably poor. Again has the manufacturer repined at having to surrender his resources to support the burden of factitious pauperism,—to take too low a place in the markets abroad in order that his agricultural neighbour may be upheld in too high an one at home. Again has the corn-dealer staked his all upon the chances of man's caprice, with about as much confidence as he would upon the cast of the die. Again gloom has brooded over the dwellings of the poor, and evil passions have wrought there, in propor-

tion to the pressure of want,—the main spring of the vast machinery of moral evil by which society is harrowed and torn. And as often as a gleam of hope and present plenty has visited the cottage of a long-suffering artizan, it has been clouded by the repinings of some neighbour whose adversity has been, by ingenious methods of misrule, made coincident with his prosperity. In this busy vale, as in every valley of England inhabited by thinking men, there is one question still for ever rising through the night air, and borne on the morning breeze,—“How long?”—and on many a hill there are thinking men to take up the inquiry, and echo “How LONG?”

Summary of Principles illustrated in this Volume.

As exchangeable value is ultimately determined by the cost of production, and as there is an incessant tendency to an increase in the cost of producing food, (inferior soils being taken into cultivation as population increases,) there is a perpetual tendency in the exchangeable value of food to rise, however this tendency may be temporarily checked by accidents of seasons, and by improvements in agricultural arts.

As wages rise (without advantage to the labourer) in consequence of a rise in the value of food, capitalists must either sell their productions dearer than is necessary where food is cheaper, or submit to a diminution of their profits.

Under the first alternative, the capitalist is incapacitated for competition with the capitalists of countries where food is cheaper: under the second, the capital of the country tends, through perpetual diminution, to extinction.

Such is the case of a thickly-peopled country depending for food wholly on its own resources.

There are many countries in the world where these tendencies have not yet shown themselves; where there is so much fertile land, that the cost of producing food does not yet increase; and where corn superabounds, or would do so, if there was inducement to grow it.

Such inducement exists in the liberty to exchange the corn with which a thinly-peopled

country may abound, for the productions in which it is deficient, and with which a populous country may abound. While, by this exchange, the first country obtains more corn in return for its other productions, and the second more of other productions in return for its corn, than could be extracted at home, both are benefited. The capital of the thickly-peopled country will perpetually grow; the thinly-peopled country will become populous; and the only necessary limit of the prosperity of all will be the limit to the fertility of the world.

But the waste of capital caused by raising corn dear and in limited quantity at home, when it might be purchased cheap and in unlimited quantity abroad, is not the only evil attending a restriction of any country to its own resources of food; a further waste of capital and infliction of hardship are occasioned by other consequences of such restriction.

As the demand for bread varies little within any one season, or few seasons, while the supply is perpetually varying, the exchangeable value of corn fluctuates more than that of any article whose return to the cost of production is more calculable.

Its necessity to existence causes a panic to arise on the smallest deficiency of supply, enhancing its price in undue proportion; and as the demand cannot materially increase on the

immediate occasion of a surplus, and as corn is a perishable article, the price falls in an undue proportion.

These excessive fluctuations, alternately wasting the resources of the consumers and the producers of corn, are avoided where there is liberty to the one class to buy abroad in deficient seasons, and to the other to sell abroad in times of superabundance.

It is not enough that such purchase and sale are permitted by special legislation when occasion arises, as there can be no certainty of obtaining a sufficient supply, on reasonable terms, in answer to a capricious and urgent demand.

Permanently importing countries are thus more regularly and cheaply supplied than those which occasionally import and occasionally export; but these last are, if their corn exchanges be left free, immeasurably more prosperous than one which is placed at the mercy of man and circumstance by a system of alternate restriction and freedom.

By a regular importation of corn, the proper check is provided against capital being wasted on inferior soils; and this capital is directed towards manufactures, which bring in a larger return of food from abroad than could have been yielded by those inferior soils. Labour is at the same time directed into the most profitable channels. Any degree of restriction on this natural direction of labour and capital is ultimately injurious to every class of the community,—to land-

owners, farming and manufacturing capitalists, and labourers.

Labourers suffer by whatever makes the prime necessary of life dear and uncertain in its supply, and by whatever impairs the resources of their employers.

Manufacturing capitalists suffer by whatever tends needlessly to check the reciprocal growth of capital and population, to raise wages, and disable them for competition abroad.

Farming capitalists suffer by whatever exposes their fortunes to unnecessary vicissitude, and tempts them to an application of capital which can be rendered profitable only by the maintenance of a system which injures their customers.

Landowners suffer by whatever renders their revenues fluctuating, and impairs the prosperity of their tenants, and of the society at large on which the security of their property depends.

As it is the interest of all classes that the supply of food should be regular and cheap, and as regularity and cheapness are best secured by a free trade in corn, it is the interest of all classes that there should be a free trade in corn.

THE END.

ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.



No. XX.

CINNAMON AND PEARLS.

A Tale.

By HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON:
CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
1833.

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CINNAMON AND PEARLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SILENT TRIP.

THE brief twilight of the tropics had just sped away before the shadows of night over the seas which gird Ceylon, when a raft, stealing along the quiet expanse before the breath of the night-wind, approached the spot beneath which lay one of the chank beds that enrich the north-west coast of the island. The situation of the bed was marked by the constant presence of a boat, placed there by the lessees of the chank bed to guard its treasures from pilferers. These chanks, or conch-shells, are a very tempting object of theft to the natives, not only as ornaments for their own persons, but as being in constant demand for the same purpose, and for burial with the distinguished dead, throughout the whole neighbouring continent of India. Sawn into rings, they deck the wrists, ankles, and fingers of many thousand dark beauties who care as little whether they are obtained by filching or by lawful fishing, as some fairer belles inquire whether their articles of luxury are smuggled or legally imported. Great pre-

cautions are therefore necessary to preserve the property of the chank monopolists ; and the best of these precautions are often useless. In the present case, the guard-boat might as well have been empty, for any opposition that it offered to the approach of the raft. The guard were probably asleep, or they would have perceived it at the moment that the moon lifted her horn above the eastern wave, spreading a sheet of light over the still expanse. At that moment, the two dusky figures which had been standing erect and silent beside the mast of the raft, began to move, though not to speak. Marana pointed to the golden light which was just appearing, and Rayo, understanding her sign, proceeded to lower the sail of matting, (which might become conspicuous in the moon-light,) and to dislodge the mast. Both figures then lay down beside it, so that the raft might have appeared, even to close observation, to be no more than a piece of drifting wood, but for the gleams sent forth from the precious stones with which Marana's silver hair-pins were set, and for the ripple of Rayo's paddle, which he contrived to ply as he lay. The critical moment must be when he plunged, as there were no sea sounds amidst which the splash might be lost. All was as quiet as a lake. The guard-boat was no cradle to those who slept within it, for it kept its place as if it had been fixed in the sand of the beach. The black points of rock which rose above the surface at a distance towards the land were reflected with perfect fidelity, instead of in

fluctuating lines of shadow. Marana dreaded the plunge for her lover, and fearfully watched to see dark figures rise up in the guard-boat while the circles were yet spreading, and breaking the moonlight to shivers on the surface. No foe appeared, however; and Marana was at liberty for new fears. There were enemies in the green depths below more formidable than any to the right hand or the left. It was quite as probable that a shark might take a fancy to this locality as a diver; and a chance meeting was little likely to end without strife. Marana drew towards the edge of the raft as its heavings subsided, and looked eagerly down, dreading to see a red tinge diffuse itself in the lucid depth, and starting at every shadow that floated through it. She was fingering her ebony beads meanwhile, and her lips moved as she murmured some aspirations compounded of a catholic prayer and a native charm. The depth was little more than two fathoms in this place, and Rayo was soon up again, though the minute of his submersion seemed incalculably longer to Marana. He delivered his pouch to her to be emptied, and rested himself by floating till he was ready for another descent.

Again and again he dived, till Marana discovered a treasure in the pouch which destroyed all further temptation to theft that night, and relieved the damsel from the anxiety of watching more descents of her lover. A shell which opened to the right, commonly called a right-handed chank, a shell esteemed worth its weight

in gold, appeared in the heap, and it was not worth while to run any further risk when so rare a possession as this was obtained. Rayo's spirits were so raised by his good fortune that he insisted on paddling quite round the 'guard-boat, near enough to see whether there was any one in it, while Marana looked anxiously at the ascending moon, whose flood of light was now veiling the stars. When she saw arms gleaming in the boat, she thought it too rash of her lover to come between the sleeping guard and the moon, and looked imploringly at him while she pointed to the shore. His curiosity once satisfied, the danger was soon over. Rayo ventured to stand up to paddle, when the raft had distanced the boat by half a mile, and Marana began her inquiries as to what he had seen in the deep.

Rayo made light, as he had done for some time past, of the achievement of diving for chanks. He had practised it as a preparation for becoming a pearl-fisher in waters three times as deep, and for a much more precious treasure. He was to make his first trial of the nobler occupation at the approaching pearl fishery; and he spoke with becoming indifference of all meaner accomplishments. He had seen no sharks to-night; there would be more chance of them in deeper water. He had been startled by no strange appearances: nine fathoms down was the scene for wonders. He had found no difficulty in filling his pouch: the oyster beds would afford harder work. Marana

thought all this was counterbalanced by the absence of a charmer who might say "avaunt!" to sharks, and interpret all marvels, and lighten all toils. If her father could have been on the raft with them to-night, she should think as little of the trip as Rayo himself; and if he could but get himself engaged for the same boat that was to carry Rayo out to his first pearl fishing, she should have confidence in his prosperity and safe return.

They fell in with no other vessel till they came in sight of the shore,—the wildest and dreariest part of the shores of Ceylon. A flat yellow beach stretched away on either hand, without rock or tree, or any object which could cast a shadow, except the huts of mud and rushes which afforded a shelter to the natives. In no place was it easier to make a landing, and in none was it more difficult to land unperceived, when sun or moon was above the horizon. No jutting rocks were there, behind whose screen a raft might lie concealed: no shady creek into which a skiff might glide and secrete itself beneath the mangroves: no groves of cocoa-nut, feathering the margin of the tide, beneath whose canopy dusky pilferers might creep to divide their spoils. All was here open to the sky, and to a sky whose lesser lights leave little unrevealed even on the night of a new moon.

Rayo and Marana had little chance of stealing to their homes unobserved while so many eyes were looking upon them from above, and

while a certain pair of vigilant human eyes preserved their wont of looking abroad upon the night. The tall figure of Father Anthony, the priest, was moving on the beach, preceded by his still taller shadow, when the raft floated on shore. Rayo saw this while still afloat; and if he had been an English smuggler, he would have pushed off again before he was recognized, and have kept out of sight till Father Anthony was safely housed. But Rayo's ideas of good manners would not allow of this. He had no notion of failing to pay his respects to any who came in his way, whatever might be the consequence of the meeting; and he now greeted Father Anthony with as much deference as Marana herself, hoping that it was no evil which kept their friend awake at this hour.

"No worse evil than being unable to rest so well here as in Europe, where there are no excessive heats of the day to make us restless at night. But what fish do you seek so late? I fear you have lost your nets," he continued, seeing no fishing apparatus on board the raft.

Marana looked at Rayo, and Rayo said nothing.

"Chanks!" exclaimed Father Anthony, perceiving now of what Marana's burden consisted. "These chanks cannot be yours."

"His hands brought them up," declared Marana, pointing to her lover.

"It may be so, but they are no more his than the comb in his hair would be mine if I were to take it from him. Rayo, why did you steal

these chanks? Do not you know that God punishes theft?"

"Is it theft to get chanks for my bride, when I have worked long for them, and can get no chanks by working? I thought God laid the chanks in our seas for our brides."

"They have become the property of some who may let your brides, or the brides of India have them, as they may see fit. God gave them into the hands of those who possess them; and He will be angry with any who take them away by fraud or violence. All cannot have these chank-beds, and those who have bought them must be protected in their possession."

"I have earned as many as I have taken," replied Rayo; "and to-night God has given them to me. The guard did not even stir when I plunged."

"And God gave him this," added Marana, showing the precious shell as an indubitable proof of all being right. Father Anthony had not been long enough in his present station to know the full value of what he now took into his hand; but if he had, his decision would have been the same,—that the chanks were not Rayo's.

Rayo was much in want of his friend's guidance. In the school, it was taught as a duty that a just reward should be given for toil. Was it a duty out of school to toil without reward?

Certainly not, except in the case of the mutual services which friends and neighbours

should yield to each other. But nobody thought of toiling without reward, as far as Father Anthony knew. The chank-fishers, he was sure, were paid. Rayo acknowledged having received certain portions of rice, and of cotton for clothing ; but never any wages which would purchase what was necessary for Marana before her father would allow her to marry. Rayo had no objection to work, but he had not doubted about the liberty of paying himself, in case of an insufficiency of wages. When he heard, however, all the denunciations that Father Anthony had to bring against the sin of theft, and it was pressed upon him that he had actually been guilty of the crime, he was perfectly submissive ; no less so than Marana, though his eyes did not stream like hers, and he did not so instantly betake himself to his devotions. He stood with his eyes cast down, waiting for instructions.

" Your duty is clear, Rayo," said Father Anthony. " He that hath stolen must not only steal no more, but must restore what he hath stolen. When the sun rises, you must go to the owners of these chanks and restore them, relating your offence and seeking their pardon ; --I need not say humbly, for I have never observed you fail in humility."

Rayo made obeisance, and Marana hoped he might also relate how he fell into the offence.

" If he does it without any pretence of justifying himself," said Father Anthony, who was not unwilling that the facts of the oppression.

under which his poor friends laboured should be brought home, on every possible occasion, to the owners of the wealth which surrounded them, and which they might not appropriate, "Rayo may say why he wishes for chanks and for the money that chanks will bring; but he must not defend himself for having taken them without leave. Neither must you excuse yourself before God, Rayo; but seek His pardon before you sleep. May He pardon and bless you, Rayo!"

"How far will you have to carry them?" asked Marana, as soon as Father Anthony was out of hearing. If it is not too far for a woman, I will go with you, and carry them, and confess for you. How far must they be carried."

Rayo pointed to his father's hut,—his own abode, and began walking towards it with a countenance of perfect content. But Marana stopped, and looked the entreaty which she dared not speak.

"They are heavy," observed Rayo, taking the chanks from her.

"No, no. I will carry them to the mountains,—I will swim with them through the sea, sooner than that the curse shall light upon you, Rayo. Father Anthony says the curse comes upon those who do not do as they say, and a great curse upon those who steal as we have done, unless they restore."

"It will bring a curse to say what he bids me say to the rich men. I shall fish no more chanks, and lose what I have got, and perhaps fish no pearls. This will be a curse."

"But what will Father Anthony say to-morrow?"

"Let us see if he finds it out."

"But the curse will come, whether Father Anthony knows or not."

"Your father shall charm it away, and you shall have your rings; and the rest shall be sold at the fishery. Then we will build a house, and we will each have new clothing, and we will be married.—But let us hide the chanks. If my father finds them, he will sell some. If Neyna finds them, she will ask for rings too. We will hide them in the rushes."

Marana dared not resist, but her horror of the curse grew every moment. She did not think at all the worse of her lover for his determination. She rather admired the bravery of it, her thoughts being employed, not on the sin, but on its apprehended consequences. She doubted whether her father had a charm strong enough to obviate the effects of her lover's rashness; and she was far less afraid of anything that might come out of the rushes than of what might come out of the deed which Rayo went to do there.

When the torches were lighted, without which it is unsafe to penetrate the places where leopards may be crouching on dry sand, hidden by the silky rushes, she went first, fearing, not the glaring eye of a savage beast, but the vigilant glance of some saint or demon whom her religion or the old superstitions of the country taught her to regard as the dispenser of punish-

ment from above. She started as the night-wind swept among the reeds, not so much from dread of some velvet paw that might be stealing towards her, as from expectation of some token of wrath. All was quiet, however. The curse was not perceived immediately to light, and the lovers parted in safety at the door of her father's hut.

Marana stood for some time hesitating between lying down at once on her mat to sleep, and waking her father, to trouble him for a charm without loss of time. A better plan than either flashed across her mind, and found more and more favour the longer she entertained it. It might avert the curse without exposing Rayo to shame ; and the loss of the chanks (which was involved in her scheme) was a small price to pay for such security. She hoped Rayo might be brought to think so ; and if not, she could rather bear his anger than see the curse light upon him. The chanks were intended chiefly for her ; and she could do without them for ornaments, and had rather marry Rayo without a house and without new clothing, than expose him to the curse : and thus, by a process of reasoning over which the fear of a curse presided, she convinced herself that the best thing she could do was to restore the chanks to their oozy bed.

Without a torch, for she had not now the means of getting one, she stole out, and crept to the hiding place among the rushes. Without bite from snake, or alarm from any living thing

more formidable than a bat, she made her way out again. Without help or hinderance, she pushed the little raft into the water, hoisted its mast and mat, and stood out alone into the shining sea. What kind of malignant beings she could imagine to be hovering between the glorious constellations and their earthly mirror, it was for her to tell. The miseries which she believed them commissioned to dispense came from a much nearer place than the nearest of those radiant spheres, or even of the dense clouds which began to show like a low wall along the horizon. The miseries under the pressure of which her lover had committed crime, and she was now dreading the atonement, came from the corrupt desires and infirm judgments of men near at hand, whose passion was for the possession of the powers of the earth, and not for alliance with the powers of the air.

When Rayo rose in the morning at his father's call, to trim the boat for a fishing expedition, he was surprised to see no sign of his little raft on the beach. It might have been washed away,—the sea being no longer so smooth as it was a few hours before: or some unscrupulous neighbour might have used it for his own convenience. It was of little consequence; a raft being the simplest and cheapest of all contrivances by which a Cingalese can set himself afloat.—The disappearance was explained when old Gomgode's flat-bottomed fishing-boat, containing himself and Rayo, had made some pro-

gress from the land, and was pitching in the rising swell, while the young man threw out his nets.

"Rayo, Rayo," said Gomgode, "what is floating out beyond? Rayo, Rayo, tell me whether it is not your raft."

Rayo believed it was, but could scarcely distinguish it yet with sufficient certainty to claim it. The old man's sight might not be really better than his son's, but it was usually sharpened by curiosity to a much greater degree than that of the less vivacious Rayo. He now perceived that there was a woman upon the raft, and then Rayo also began to see very clearly; —and not only to see, but to act. Gomgode could not conceive what possessed Rayo to draw in the nets so hastily, and quit their station, and give up every thing for the sake of following or meeting this raft, when to-day, of all days, it was important to secure a good draught of fish. They had come out early on purpose, the auction of the oyster-banks being just about to be held, giving a fine opportunity for the sale of fish. One boat after another was dropping out from the shore, and Rayo was losing all the advantage of being out first,—was giving up all his preparations, for the sake of making towards the raft.

"Rayo, Rayo," the old man exclaimed.

"Father, Marana is there, dripping and struggling."

"Is it Marana? It is Marana. What sent her out, Rayo? How long has she been out,

Rayo? Did you know that she had your raft, Rayo? O, Rayo, what is she going to do now, Rayo?"

Marana was about to do a somewhat perilous thing. She was about to dash through a threatening wave as a horserider bursts through a blind hoop, trusting to light again. The sea was now far too rough for so slight a machine as this raft. It pitched and shivered as every wave broke over it, and afforded so little secure hold against the stronger swells which succeeded each other, that Marana seemed to find it her best way to pass through them separately. She was seen standing with her face towards the approaching wave, eyeing it steadily, and cleaving her way through it so as to come out near the very point to which the raft was descending from its ridge. This was all very well for awhile; but Marana was yet a great way from shore, and it was scarcely possible but that such a succession of plunges must exhaust her before she could commit herself finally to the waves to be cast upon the beach. It was contrary to her habits also to use much exertion, and the effort which brought her out thus alone upon the sea, —whatever might be its motive,—could hardly be long sustained. Rayo was full of wonder and of fear; and his father's remonstrances and questions stood little chance of being attended to till Marana was safe on board.

Marana herself, though by far the most deferential person that Gomgode was wont to meet, could scarcely bring herself to give an

answer to his inquiries till she had obtained Rayo's forgiveness for having, at great sacrifice to herself, averted the curse from him. Meek and downcast, the dusky beauty stood before him, her half-clothed frame trembling with her late exertions, and the salt water dripping from her hair. One corner of her garment seemed to be very carefully cherished by her. It contained the precious right-handed chank. She had not found in her heart to part with it, on arriving at the place of deposit: and, while hesitating, several good reasons for keeping it occurred to her,—as is not unfrequently the case with those who are religious after her manner, any more than with those who are not religious at all. It was a pity the shell should be lost, and it was likely never to be fished up among so many. It might be turned to a much better purpose, if her father would make it a charm. There could be no sin in keeping it, if it was thus converted to a religious use instead of being sold for a profit. Marana therefore kept the chank, and was the better able to bear her lover's displeasure from the silent consciousness that she held a treasure for him in her possession.

She did not make a syllable of reply to his lowering look and few cutting words against herself; and when his wrath turned upon Father Anthony, or rather upon any priest or religion which interfered with his doings, Marana testified only by a slight glance round her that she was uneasy under this rashness of complaint.

The moment the boat touched the shore after a prosperous trip, she hastened to her father's cottage, not waiting to observe how much more Gomgode would ask for his fish than they were actually worth, nor even to 'hear whether anything was yet known of the quality of the oysters which had been brought up as a sample from the pearl banks, and on whose evidence the auction was to proceed. She had an office to discharge, in common with her neighbours; —to dress and light up the road by which the agent of the government was to approach: and she was anxious to obtain the desired favour from her father before she went forth.

The Charmer, who was expecting an application, in the course of this day, to hold his services in readiness for the fishery, was now absorbed in his preparations. He sat in a corner of his hut with his documents spread before him. Strips of the talipot-leaf, on which some consecrated style, guided by a wise man's hand, had traced mysterious characters, lay before the Charmer, and beads and images and various sacred indescribable articles were scattered around. He gave no heed to his child when she entered, and his melancholy countenance wore a deeper sadness than usual.

“ Father ! ” softly said Marana, after some time waiting his pleasure; “ where will the sharks be during the fishery ? ”

The Charmer shook his head, and acknowledged his doubt whether St. Anthony would be permitted to keep them all within the bounds of

Adam's Bridge, or whether some would be left at large between the north banks and the shore. The south banks would be safe ; but the north, alas ! were those in which Marana was interested.

" Father ! the monsoon will surely not arrive too early ?"

" Not till April is nearly past," he replied, cheerfully. " It is even likely that there may be complaints in the south of drought, from the delay of the rains. There will be no storms in our fishery."

" I will ask Father Anthony to praise the saints.—Will the fishery be rich ?"

" To some, and not to others. This is commonly the case ; and I cannot discover whose countenances will be sad in Aripo, and whose merry voices will sing along the shore at Condatchy, when the last signal-gun has brought back the last boat."

There was a long pause before Marana ventured to utter the more important question,

" Father ! will any one be waited for in the paradise under the sea ?"

The Charmer rubbed his hand over his brow, and said that this was the point he was endeavouring to ascertain when his daughter entered. His indications were at variance ; and whether the fishery was to be fatal to none, or to more than he had put the question for, he could not decide.—Marana felt that she must request Father Anthony to intercede with, as well as praise the saints.

" 'Is it a blind day to you, father?' she inquired, struck by his tone of doubt on almost every topic she had introduced.

" 'My blind days are many,' he replied, 'and the blindness troubles me. Marcair looks doubtfully upon me, and I look doubtfully upon myself, —because I warned him that a wild elephant would tread his rice-ground seven nights ago. Marcair lighted eleven fires, and thirty-two friends kept watch with him for three nights; and not a twig was heard to snap in the jungle: and those who laid ear to the ground say that not so much as a panther trod within a mile.'

" 'Seven nights since? That was the night that ball of white fire crossed the sky——'

" 'A ball of fire! St. Anthony opened your eyes to see it! A ball of white fire cast from the hand of a saint is more fearful than eleven fires kindled by men's hands.'

" 'The elephant was scared, father, no doubt. The ball passed over that very jungle, and then above Marcair's rice-ground, and then into the sea.'

The Charmer's spirits were so raised by the news of this interposition, that he presently contrived to bring his most important calculations to an agreement, and then lost no time in charming the shell, that his daughter might be at liberty to reveal to the neighbours what she had seen on the seventh preceding night, and thus re-establish her father's credit.

She had never heard her father speak more positively on any point than on this,—that if

Rayo was married to her before he went out to the fishery, this charm would bring Rayo back safe from the fishery.—It followed that Rayo should have his wish, and be married before the adventure. There being no dwelling ready nor any thing to put therein, was a matter of small moment in comparison with Rayo's safety.

Marana went forth with her usual slow and demure step and demeanour: but the torches which flashed here and there on her path were reflected back from her eyes as brightly as from the topazes on the crown of her head. With a lighter, but no less graceful touch than usual, did she unfurl the fan-like talipot leaves of which the tents for the strangers were composed. With more than her usual fancy did she feather with cocoa-nut leaves the poles of bamboo to which torches were to be fastened at intervals along the road. She was too poor to pay the tribute of white cotton cloth for the government agent to walk upon, when he should arrive within sight of the huts: but she had a new song to offer, which was worth full as much. She had, besides, a little cocoa-nut oil to spare for the anointing of a sister beauty or two, when she had made her own toilet: so that the remark went round that Marana must have got some new charm from her father for her special adornment. Rayo's manner seemed to show that he thought so too.

CHAPTER II.

A MUSHROOM CITY.

AFTER the usual expenditure of anxiety, prudence, jealousy, wrath and cunning, the letting of the Pearl banks had been accomplished. A great speculator had offered government a certain sum for the whole fishery of the season, and had then let the different banks to various merchants, to whom the gracious permission was given to make what they could of the natives of the land as well as of the sea ;—not only to appropriate the natural wealth of the region, but to bring its inhabitants as near to the brink of starvation as they pleased in their methods of employing their toil. Pearls seem to be thought beautiful all over the world where they have been seen. Empresses in the north, ladies of all degree in the east and west, and savages between the tropics, all love to wear pearls ; and where is there a woman, in an Esquimaux hut or a Welsh farmhouse, who would not wear pearls if she could obtain them ? And why should not all have pearls who wish for them, if there is a boundless store, and labourers enough willing and ready to provide them ? Alas ! there are not only few wearers of pearls because the interests of the many are not consulted, but the labourers who obtain them are by the same cause kept bare of almost the necessities of life, going

forth hungry and half naked to their toil, and returning to seek rest amidst the squalidness of poverty, while hundreds and thousands of their families and neighbours stand on the shore envying them as they depart, and preparing to be jealous of them on their return: both parties being, all the while, the natural owners of the native wealth of their region. And why is all this injustice and tyranny ? That a few, a very few, may engross a resource which should enrich the many. Yet, not many things are more evident than that to impoverish the many is the most certain method of ultimately impoverishing the few ; and the reverse. If the government would give away its pearl banks to those who now fish those banks for the scantiest wages which will support life, government would soon gain more in a year from the pearls of Ceylon than it has hitherto gained by any five fisheries. If buyers might bid for pearls from every quarter of the world to those who might sell any where, and after their own manner, Cingalese huts of mud and rushes would grow into dwellings of timber and stone ; instead of bare walls, there would be furniture from a thousand British warehouses ; instead of marshes, there would be rice-fields ; instead of rickety coasting boats, there would be fleets of merchantmen riding in the glorious harbours of the island ; instead of abject prayers from man to man as the one is about to suffer the dearth which the other inflicts, there would be the good will and thanksgiving which spring from abundance ;

instead of complaints on the one hand of expensive dependence, and murmurs about oppression on the other, there would be mutual congratulation for mutual aid. Ceylon would over pay, if required, in taxes, if not in advantageous commerce, any sacrifice of the monopolies by which she has been more thoroughly and ingeniously beggared than any dependency on which British monopoly has exercised its skill; and Britain might disburthen her conscience of the crime of perpetuating barbarism in that fairest of all regions, for whose civilization she has made herself responsible. There are many methods of introducing civilization; and some very important ones have been tried upon this beautiful island, and with as much success as could be expected; but the most efficacious,—the prime method,—is only beginning to be tried,—the allowing the people to gain the property which nature has appointed as their share of her distribution. Let the Cingalese gather their own pearls, exchange their own timber, sell their own dyes wherever and in whatsoever manner they like, and they will soon understand comfort, and care for luxuries, like all who have comforts and luxuries within their reach; and with these desires and attainments will come the perceptions of duty,—the new sense of obligation which it is the object of all plans of civilization to introduce.

Great pains had been taken to civilize Rayo. He had been schooled and watched over—he could read, and he respected the religion of his priest; he was willing to toil, and had a taste

for comfort. But, beyond the hope of acquiring a hut and a mat or two, there was little stimulus to toil, and as little to conduct himself with a view towards any future circumstances. Strangers not only carried away the wealth of the land, but they prevented that wealth from growing, and therefore the labour of the inhabitants from obtaining a wider field. As pearls were fished ten years before, so they would be fished ten years hence, for any probability that he saw to the contrary. A thousand divers carried away a pittance then, insufficient to bring over to them the desirable things which were waiting on the shores of the neighbouring continent for a demand ; and a like pittance might such another thousand carry away in time to come ; in like manner might they sigh for foreign commodities, and in like manner might foreign commodities be still waiting, wrought or unwrought, for a demand. Therefore was Rayo still in a state of barbarism, though he understood and praised the trial by jury, and could read the prayers of his church. He was in a state of barbarism, for these accomplishments had no influence on his conduct and his happiness. He was selfish in his love ; fraudulent with an easy conscience in his transactions of business ; and capable of a revenge towards his superiors as remorseless as his deportment was gentle and polished. No circumstance had ever produced so happy an effect upon him as his advancement to be a pearl-diver, an advancement in dignity, if not in gain. It was the last promotion he was ever likely to ob-

tain ; but, besides that it softened his heart by occasioning his immediate marriage, it gave him the new object of distinguishing himself, and opened the possibility of his profiting by some stray pearl, or by some chance opportunity of speculating on a lot of oysters. He walked to join his company on the beach with a demeanour unlike that by which Rayo was commonly known ; and his young wife looked after him with a new feeling of pride.

He was sure to be as safe as on shore, for the Charmer was to go in the same boat, and no shark binder of the whole assemblage was more confident of having effectually bound the sharks than Marana's father. All were confident ; and the crowds on the beach looked as joyous for the night as if the work was going on for their sakes. A city of bowers seemed to have sprung up like Jonah's gourd, or like the tabernacles which, in old times of Jewish festivals, made Jerusalem a leafy paradise for a short season of every year. Talipot tents, and bamboo huts dressed with greens and flowers were clustered around the sordid dwellings on the sands. Throngs of merchants and craftsmen, black, tawny, and white, with their variety of costumes, mingled in this great fair. The polisher of jewels was there with his glittering treasure. The pearl-driller looked to his needles and pearl dust, while awaiting on his low seat the materials on which he was to employ his skill. The bald, yellow-mantled priest of Budhoo passed on amidst obeisances in one place, as did the Catholic pastor in

another. The white vested Mahomedan, the turbaned Hindoo, the swathed Malay merchants exhibited their stores, or looked passively on the gay scene. The quiet Dutchman from the south sent a keen glance through the market in quest of precious stones in the hands of an ignorant or indolent vender. The haughty Candian abated his fierceness, and stepped out of the path of the European ; while the stealthy Cingalese was in no one's path, but won his way like a snake in the tall grass of the jungle. The restless lessees of the banks, meanwhile, were flitting near the boats, now ranged in a long row, each with its platform, ropes and pulleys ; each with its shark-binder, its pilot, its commander, its crew of ten, and its company of ten divers. The boat-lights were being kindled, one by one, and scattering a thousand sparkles over the rippling tide. It was just on the stroke of ten, and the signal gun was all that was waited for. The buzz of voices fell into a deep silence as the expectation became more intense. Those who were wont to make the heavens their clock and the stars its hour-hand, looked up to mark the precise inclination of the Southern Cross ; while those who found an index in the flow of the tide, paced the sands from watermark to watermark. Yet more turned their faces southward towards the dark outline of hill and forest that rose on the horizon, and watched for the land breeze. It came,—at first in light puffs which scarcely bowed the rushes around the lagoons, or made a stir among the stalks in the rice-ground. Moment by moment

it strengthened, till the sails of the boats began to bulge, and every torch and faggot of cocoa-nut leaves on the beach slanted its forks of flame towards the sea, as if to indicate to the voyagers their way. Then the signal-gun boomed, its wreath of smoke curled lazily upward and dispersed itself in the clear air, while a shout, in which every variety of voice was mingled, seemed to chase the little fleet into the distance. The shouting ceased amidst the anxiety of watching the clusters of receding lights, which presently looked as if they had parted company with those in the sky, and had become a degree less pure by their descent. Then rose the song of the dancing-girls, as they stood grouped, each with a jewelled arm withdrawn from beneath her mantle, and her jet-black hair bound with strings of pearl. Mixed with their chant, came the mutterings and gabblings of the charmers who remained on shore, contorting their bodies more vehemently than would have been safe on any footing less stable than terra-firma.

The most imposing part of the spectacle was now to the people at sea. As their vessels were impelled by an unintermitting wind through the calmest of seas, they were insensible to motion, and the scene on shore, with its stir and its sound, seemed to recede like the image of a phantasmagoria, till the flickering lights blended into one yellow haze in which every distinct object was lost. It became at length like a dim star, contrasting strangely in brightness and in hue with the constellation which appeared to rise as

rapidly as majestically over the southern hills, like an auxiliary wheeling his silent force to restore the invaded empire of night. Night now had here undisputed sway ; for the torches which flared at the prows of the boats were tokens of homage, and not attempts at rivalship of her splendours.

Sailing is nearly as calculable a matter on these expeditions as a journey of fifty miles in an English mail-coach. There is no need to think about the duration of the darkness, in a region where the days and nights never vary more than fifteen minutes from their equal length ; and, as for a fair wind, if it is certain that there will be one to carry you straight out at ten to-night, it is equally certain that there will be an opposite one to bring you straight in before noon to-morrow. Nature here saves you the trouble of putting engine and paddle-box into your boat, in order to be able to calculate your going forth and your return. By the time the amber haze in the east was parting to disclose the glories of a tropical sunrise, the fleet was stationed in a circle over the banks. Every stray shark had received its commands to close its jaws, and hie back to Adam's Bridge ; and on each side of every platform stood five men, every one with his foot slung on the pyramidal stone, whose weight must carry him nine fathoms down into the regions of monstrous forms and terrifying motions.

Rayo was one who was thus in readiness. He stood next to the Charmer,—Marana's father,—over whom a change seemed to have come since

he left the land. It might be from the fasting necessary to his office ; it might be from the intensity of his devotion ; but it might also be from fear, that his hands shook as he fumbled among his sacred furniture, and his voice quavered as he chaunted his spells. Rayo perceived his disorder, and a qualm came over the heart of the young diver,—a qualm such as assails the servile agent of a rich man's prosperity much sooner than one in whom independence brings bravery. Rayo looked keenly at the Charmer ; but the Charmer avoided meeting his eye, and it was not permitted to interrupt his incantation.

It was, perhaps, not the better for Rayo that the opposite five went first,—it gave more time for the unstringing of his nerves. The splash of the thousand men who descended within the circle took away his breath as effectually as the closing waters were about to deprive him of it. It was a singular sight to see the half of this vast marshalled company thus suddenly engulfed, and to think of them, in one moment after, as forming a human population at the bottom of the sea. To be a subject of the experiment was to the full as strange as to witness it, as Rayo found, when the minute of his companions' submersion was at length over, and a thousand faces (very nearly scarlet, notwithstanding their tawny skins) rushed up through the green wave. Spouting, dripping, and panting, they convulsively jerked their burden of oysters out upon the platform, and then tried to deliver their news from the regions below ; but for this news their comrades must not

wait. Down went Rayo, to find out the difference between three fathoms and nine. How far the lively idea of a shark's row of teeth might have quickened his perceptions, he did not himself inquire ; but he was conscious of a more dazzling flash before his eyes, a sharper boring of the drum of his ear, and a general pressure so much stronger than ever before, that it would have been easy for him to believe, if he had been a Hindoo, like his neighbours, that he supported the tortoise that supported the elephant that supported the globe. He could see nothing at first in the dizzy green that was suffocating and boiling him ; but that did not signify, as he had no time to look about him. He thought he was descending clean into a shark's jaws, so sharp was that against which his left great toe struck, when his descent from the ninth heaven to the ninetieth abyss was at length accomplished. (How could any one call it nine fathoms ?) On meeting this shark's tooth, or whatever it was, yelling was found to be out of the question. It was luckily forgotten in the panic, that the rope was to be pulled in case of accident ;—luckily, as there was no alternative between Rayo's losing all credit as a diver, and the fishing being at an end for that day, from his spreading the alarm of a shark. He did not pull the rope ; he only pulled up his left leg vigorously enough to assure himself that it was still in its proper place ; by which time he discovered that he had only mistaken a large, gaping oyster for a hungry shark. Rayo's great toe being not exactly the viand that this oyster

had a longing for, it ceased to gape, and Rayo manfully trampled it under foot, before wrenching it from the abode of which its seven years' lease had this day expired. These oysters required a terrible wrenching, considering that there was no taking breath between. Now he had got the knack. A pretty good handful, that!—St. Anthony! where did that slap in the face come from—so cold and stunning? Rayo's idea of a buffet from the devil was, that it would be hot; so he took heart, and supposed it was a fish, as indeed it was. He must go now,—O! O! he must go. He should die now before he could get up through that immeasurable abyss. But where was the rope? St. Anthony! where was the rope? He was lost! No! it was the rope slapped his face this time. Still he was lost! A shadowy, striding mountain was coming upon him,—too enormous to be any fish but a whale. Suppose Rayo should be the first to see a whale in these seas! St. Anthony! It was one of his companions. If they were not gone up yet, could not he stay an instant longer, and so avoid being made allowance for as the youngest diver of the party? No, not an instant. He rather thought he must be dead already, for it was hours since he breathed. He was alive enough, however, to coil himself in the rope. Then he went to sleep for a hundred years; then,—what is this? dawn? A green dawn?—brighter,—lighter,—vistas of green light everywhere, with wriggling forms shooting from end to end of them. Pah! here is a mouthful of ooze. Rayo

should not have opened his mouth. Here is the air at last ! Rayo does not care ; the water does as well by this time. If he is not dead now, water will never kill him, for he has been a life-time under it.

" Well, Rayo," says the captain, " you have done pretty well for the first time. You have been under water a full minute, and one man is up before you. Here comes another."

" A full minute !"

Even so. Who has not gone through more than this in a dream of less than a minute ? and yet more if he has been in sudden peril of instant death, when the entire life is lived over again, with the single difference of all its events being contemporaneous ? Since it is impossible to get into this position voluntarily, let him who would know the full worth of a minute of waking existence, plunge nine fathoms deep,—not in the sandy ooze of a storm-vext ocean, where he might as well be asleep for anything that he will see,—but in some translucent region which Nature has chosen for her treasury.

Rayo had re-discovered one of the natural uses of air ; but he was in despair at the prospect before him. Forty or fifty such plunges as this to-day ! and as many more to-morrow, and almost every day for six weeks ! Forty or fifty life-times a-day for six weeks ! This is not the sort of eternity he had ever thought of desiring ; and if purgatory is worse, Father Anthony had not yet spoken half ill enough of it. Rayo had better turn priest : he could speak eloquently now on any subject connected with duration."

Before the end of the day's work, however, this impression was much weakened. The minutes of submersion grew shorter, fish and their shadows more familiar, and much of the excessive heat and cold were found to have proceeded from within. Before noon, Rayo could consider of certain things to be attended to on the platform, as well as on the oyster-bed.

Oysters gape sometimes in the air as well as in the water. As Rayo floated in the intervals of his plunges, (having grown so hardy as to resist the remonstrances of the Charmer,) he observed the commander take the opportunity of slipping a morsel of wood into any oyster-shell that might happen to open, to prevent its closing again, and thus to save the necessity of waiting for the putrefaction of the fish before its treasure could be extracted. Rayo also perceived, that by an unheeded touch of the commander's foot, one of these oysters was dislodged from its horizontal position, and slipped with its hinge uppermost, so as to give exit to a large white pearl, so round that it rolled on and on, till it was stopped by a piece of rope, under whose shadow it lay apparently unperceived. It would have been risking too much to mount the boat in this present interval, for the purpose of picking up the pearl. Rayo must wait till after the next plunge ; and in the meantime, it was but too probable somebody would move the rope, and either discover the pearl, or let it run away to some useless place. Such a pearl as this was worth all the chanks that Marana had cast away, including

the right-handed one. Such a pearl as this would build a boat as well as a house, and make Marana look like a bride indeed. Such a pearl as this was no more than Rayo believed the proper payment of his labour, considering that strangers carried away all the profit from the country people. Such a pearl—this very pearl—might have come into his possession, if he had taken the chance, like some of his companions, of a lot of oysters, instead of small, fixed wages. In short, Rayo designed to have the pearl, and found means of justifying the act of dishonesty, which he would have strongly scrupled if he had been serving a party in whose prosperity he was interested, instead of one who interfered with the prosperity of himself and his countrymen. What Father Anthony had taught served little other purpose at present than quickening Rayo's ingenuity in finding reasons for doing whatever suited him. Such instruction might confirm and exalt his integrity, when he should have any. In the meantime, his social circumstances did more to make him dishonest than his religion to render him honest.

When he came up next time, he made so much haste to scramble into the boat, and seemed so much hurried that the Charmer started up in terror lest he should have lost a limb,—an accident which the binder of sharks had been expecting all the morning, from a complete failure of confidence in his own skill. When he saw that all was safe, he very nearly forgot his dignity so far as to assist the youth in emptying

his net of oysters upon the heap in the middle of the platform. He stopped short, however, on Rayo's repulsing his offers of help, and went back to his seat, commanding the practice of coming on board instead of floating between the plunges. Rayo sank down on his knees to empty his pouch. The rope was within reach, and under it still lay the pearl. It was very natural for Rayo to draw the rope towards him, if he really wanted to ascertain whether the one round his body was strong enough; but it was not equally natural for him to put his hand to his mouth under pretence of dashing the wet from his face where little wet remained. So, at least, the commander thought; and he was confirmed by observing a hasty effort to swallow when Rayo was summoned to descend again. Measures of which the youth little dreamed were in preparation for him while he was down. He was hoisted upon the platform, and before he knew what he was about, a man seized him by either arm, a third stepped behind him, flourishing a knotted rope, while a fourth presented a cocoa-nut shell of liquid, which did not look or smell very tempting. He was told of a summary sentence to be flogged for putting his hand to his mouth while within arm's-length of oysters, (a great crime in Ceylon, whatever it may be elsewhere,) and to swallow a strong emetic as the ordeal of innocence of a further crime. It would have been useless to attempt to upset the cup; for a double dose would have been the consequence, an ample stock of emetics being the part of the

apparatus of pearl-fishing least grudged by the speculators. Boiling was equally impossible. There was nothing for it but to bolt the medicine. The pearl of course appeared, in due time; and when it once more vanished beneath the lid of the commander's spring-box, the fairest of poor Rayo's hopes vanished with it. He might consider himself, not disgraced,—for his companions were wont to applaud the act of stealing pearls,—but turned off from his employment for this bout, and precluded from the means of establishing Marana in any thing better than four bare mud walls.

"Pillal Karra," (binder of sharks,) "you are wise," observed the commander respectfully. "I have seen your downcast looks. Doubtless you knew what should befall this youth."

"If any doubted our power," said the Charmer, "they should observe how a mysterious trouble comes first to foreshow the misfortune that will follow. When I was younger, I was content to keep off the misfortune; and when I was overruled by the Malabar hags, to let the mischief come without warning to myself. Now when my mind is tossed, I am learning to know that the Malabar hags are riding a coming storm."

"Have these hags bewitched your son-in-law?"

"No doubt; and I know which of them it is. It is Amoottra, who owes me a grudge on account of Marana's beauty. If she could meet my daughter out of the line of my charms, she would touch her with leprosy."

"Well; if you can convince my employer of

this, and disenchant Rayo, he may come out again to-morrow. Otherwise, he has taken his last plunge for this season; for there parts the first boat from the circle."

As the boats warped round into line, the sea-breeze freshened, and all were presently making a steady progress homewards. Almost as soon as they came in sight of the orange-tinted shore, apparently floating in the hot haze of noon, they saw a spark glitter, and some seconds after came the boom of the signal-gun which was to announce their return to the anxious speculators and the public at large in the fair. The flag was next hoisted, and then every man, woman, and child was looking to seaward while hastening to secure standing-room on the margin of the tide. The Charmers began to be ambiguous about this day's success, and to prophesy magnificently for the next. The dancing girls stationed themselves round certain matted enclosures, ready to welcome the oysters to their place of putrefaction. Father Anthony borrowed a telescope of a contractor, whose hand shook so that he could make no use of it himself; and Marana stood apart under the shade of a talipot leaf, lowering her primitive umbrella, with tantalizing constancy, as often as a gallant stranger or a curious country-woman would have peeped under it.

A talipot leaf will shelter two heads, and hide two faces, as was soon proved with Marana's. Rayo did not particularly wish to encounter Father Anthony, and had withdrawn Marana among the huts, where, screened by the umbrella,

they mourned the adventure. Father Anthony's eyes, however, were keen. Keenly they peered under the shelter, and made Rayo's droop before them. In vain Rayo pleaded his father-in-law's word, that he was bewitched by a Malabar hag. Father Anthony did not allow Malabar hags to lay waste the fold of which he was the shepherd. —Rayo bowed his head submissively, and waited for orders.

“ Do not insult the contractor by a plea of witchcraft.”

“ I will not, father.”

“ Do not seek to be employed again this season. There are many waiting for the office who deserve it better than you. For this season, I shall recommend Tilleke in your place ; by next season, I hope you will have wrestled with temptation, so that I may send my blessing forth with you.”

“ Is the blessing passed away ?” asked Rayo, prostrating himself before the priest, with deep sorrow in his tone and countenance.

“ Perhaps not, if you will freely confess.”

“ I will, father.”

Marana moved away, and remained out of hearing with her back turned towards them, till the priest at length passed her. Dropping a few words of good cheer, he exhorted her to be a tender wife, but withal faithful to her religion, and then he trusted Rayo would become proof against every kind of evil instigation or influence. It really was remarkable that such influences seemed to beset him in particular places.

His sins of theft took place at sea, where compunction never seemed to visit him ; while no one could be more penitent and submissive than Rayo on land. Did Marana know of any instance of his committing a theft on shore, or being penitent at sea ? Marana could recollect none, and was confirmed in her dread of the Malabar witch. If she could but get Rayo farther inland !—she said to herself, as Father Anthony gave her his blessing, and went on his way.

This aspiration was nearer its accomplishment than she could have supposed.

“ Rayo, what could make you take the pearl ? ” she asked, when she returned to her husband.

“ If there were a cocoa-nut tree here, as in the south, I should not want the money which I cannot get. We might build under its shade, and eat its fruit, and drink the milk from the kernel, and make our ropes of its fibres, and burn lamps of its oil. But as there are no cocoa-nuts where we live, I got chanks. You threw them away, and I tried to get a pearl. If I must not have a pearl—”

“ Let us go to the cocoa-trees, as they cannot come to us.”

“ If I go at all, I will go far ;—down among the cinnamon gardens, Marana.”

“ Not to be a cinnamon peeler ! ” exclaimed Marana, who thought she saw a desperation in her husband’s countenance, such as a man might wear who was about to lose caste. It was now a disputed point which caste ought to rank

highest,—the fishermen or the cinnamon-peelers; but Marana, as in duty bound, as a fisherman's daughter, regarded the cinnamon-peelers as upstarts. " You, a fisherman, will not mix with the cinnamon-peelers ? "

Rayo explained no more of his purpose in going among the cinnamon gardens than that it was not to mix with the peelers. But he gloomily hinted that perhaps Marana ought not to go,—would she not there be out of the limit of her father's charms ? Might not the hag Amootra

" Touch me with leprosy ? No," said Marana, producing the precious shell from a corner of her mantle. " My father needs not draw out his spell at home while I carry this with me. I have shown it to you, Rayo, but you will not sell it ? If we live among the cocoa-nuts, we shall not want the money. You will not take it from me to part with it ? "

Rayo let her deposit it in her mantle, and then she was ready to go. Every thing that she possessed was now on her person. Her father was certain, from the nature of his profession, of being well taken care of; and, if not, her husband's claims upon her would have been paramount. Leaving the Charmer to discover by his spells why and whither they were gone, and old Gomgode to catch fish for himself and his daughter, the young folks stole away towards the richer country to the south. They knew that there was little danger of pursuit. There was no lack of divers to supply Rayo's place.

Nobody supposed they would actually starve; and, as for living poorly, it was what thousands had done before them, thousands were doing now, and thousands would do after them. Gomgode supposed Rayo would preserve caste. The charmer trusted his daughter not to expose herself rashly to the hag's wrath, as she knew the consequences. Perhaps Father Anthony missed and mourned them most; but he had a firm faith that Rayo would prove an honester man in the jungle, or among the paddy-fields, than on a haunted sea.

CHAPTER III.

MORNING IN THE JUNGLE.

DURING the time of the cinnamon harvest, it was the custom of Mr. Carr, the agent of the East India Company for the management of their cinnamon contract, to ride every morning through one department or another of the Marandahn, or great cinnamon garden near Colombo. The beauty of the ride might afford sufficient temptation at any season of the year. The blue lake of Colombo, whether gleaming in the sunrise, or darkening in the storms of the monsoon, never lost its charms. The mountain range in the distance was an object for the eye to rest lovingly upon, whether clearly outlined against the glowing sky, or dressed in soft

clouds, from which Adam's Peak alone stood aloft, like a dark island in the waters that are above the firmament.

Whether the laurel-like cinnamon wore its early foliage of red or its later of green, or its white blossom that made the landscape dazzling with beauty and voluptuous with fragrance; whether the talipot upreared its noble crest of straw-coloured blossoms above its green canopy, or presented its clustering fruit; whether the cocoa-nut tree bowed before the gusts of autumn, or stood in dark, majestic clumps above the verdure of a less lofty growth, the groves and gardens were a paradise to the eye of the Europeans.

The reaches of road, and the green paths which might be detected here and there amidst the vast plantation, the rice grounds and patches of meadow land interspersed, and the lowly roof peeping out occasionally from beneath the palms, gave hints of the presence of man and civilization; while the temple, with its oriental dome supported on slender pillars, jutting out at the extreme end of a promontory into the blue waters of the lake, or perched on some point of the piled rocks in the background, carried back the thoughts to old days of barbarian superstition. In all this there was so much pleasure as to make a ride in the Marandahn a tempting pleasure at all times and seasons; though Mr. Carr's interest was at its height during the cinnamon harvest.

As he was about to mount his horse one

morning, the sound of argument, not to say dispute, reached him from within.

"My dear child," Mrs. Carr was saying, "Roomeree and Pellikee shall give you an airing nearer home, so that you will not be killed with the heat. Do not think of going with papa this morning."

"O, mama, you know papa says nothing tires me. I can ride as far as papa; and papa says he likes to show me what the people are doing; and I am sure the people like me to go too. Papa enjoys his ride so much more when I go with him; and the horse does not think me very heavy."

"Heavy! no, love! You are so small and slight, Alice, that it makes me tremble to think of your going out under such a sun as it will be by the time you get back. Papa always promises to take a very short ride; and it ends with his bringing you home at the end of four or five hours. Better stay with me, love."

"All the rest of the day, mama; but papa has had the right saddle put on, and we are to go the west ride this morning. Cannot you go to sleep till we come back?"

Mrs. Carr promised to try; and, to do her justice, she was always ready to do her best to sleep, day and night, bidden and unbidden. With a few sighs over the charming spirits and the unquenchable curiosity of the dear child, she closed her eyes on the dewy radiance of a morning in paradise, and was glad that she had nothing more to do with cinnamon than to be

tired of hearing of it, and to taste it when she pleased.

Alice used her eyes to more purpose this morning. She was yet new enough to scenes like those before her to be full of wonder, and other feelings, as natural, perhaps, but less desirable.

"Papa, do giants live in this place?"

"Giants, my dear, no. What made you fancy such a thing? You have seen no very amazing people, have you?"

"No; they are very small pretty people, I think. Sometimes, when I see them under such a very tall clump of trees as that, or among the jungle grass, they put me more in mind of dark fairies than giants; but—"

"But the trees are some of them fit for giants' walking-sticks, I suppose you think; and an elephant is a very proper animal for a giant to ride. Hey?"

"I have seen men on elephants," replied Alice. "But look there! Look at that great castle!" And she pointed with awe to a mighty object which was partially revealed as the morning mists drew off.

"That is not a castle, my dear; though I do not wonder at your taking it for one. It is a mountain-peak."

"But the drawbridge, papa;—the drawbridge hanging in the air."

"Ah! you would be a long time in finding out what that drawbridge (as you call it) is. You think it made for giants; but it would

break down under your weight. That is only a bridge of creeping plants, for birds and butterflies to hide in. If a strong wind came, you would see it swing, like your swing between the cherry trees in the orchard at your grand-mama's, in England.—When we get out of the garden and nearer the thickets, you will see some such flowers as that bridge is made of, hanging from the trees, and binding them together so that we cannot ride through them."

" But I do not want to get out of the garden yet. Here come the people, one after another, from their cottages, with their crooked knives to cut down the branches. What are those tawny people doing in the shade? They seem to be sitting very comfortably, all in a ring. This is prettier than seeing grandmama's mowers in England, besides that the mowers do not sing at their work, like these people."

" The mowers in England have more reason to sing than many of these peelers. Look how thin many of them are; and that poor child playing in the grass appears half-starved. Very few people in England are so poor as some of the natives here, who yet sing from morning till night."

Alice observed that they were not all thin; and she pointed to one man whose legs were of an enormous size, and to another whose body was nearly as broad as it was long.—She was told that these appearances were caused by disease; and that the diseases of the labourers were in a great degree owing to their poor way

of living. There would be few such swollen or emaciated bodies as these if the people had flesh to eat, or good bread, or even the seasoning which was necessary to make their vegetable food agree with them.

“Seasoning! What sort of seasoning?”

“Salt, and pepper, and cardamoms, and cinnamon.”

“Salt, papa! They must be very lazy if they do not get salt enough. There is the sea all round Ceylon; and I have seen several ponds where the water was so salt I could not drink it. There was a crust of salt all about the edge, papa.”

“Very true, my dear; but the people are not allowed to take it. The king of Candy lives in the middle of this island; and the kings of Candy have sometimes been troublesome people to the English, as they were to the Dutch before them. Now, as the king of Candy cannot get to the sea, or to any salt lake, without our king's leave, he and his people depend upon us for salt; and our government likes to keep him quiet, and get a great price for its salt at the same time by selling it to the Candians very dear, and by letting nobody else sell any. So the people of the country are not allowed to help themselves to salt.”

“But if there was not enough, I would rather make the king of Candy go without than these poor people who belong to us. We ought to take care of them first.”

“The government likes to take care of itself

before either its own people or the Candians. There is salt enough for every body here, and for half India besides; and large quantities are destroyed every year, to keep up the price, while many are dying for want of it, and those who live can get nothing better than coarse dirty salt which the beasts in your grandmama's farm-yard would turn away from. If we could count the numbers of Hindoos who die in India for want of the salt which their own country produces, we should find that a fearful reckoning awaits the Company there, as there does the government here; a fearful balance of human life against a high price for salt."

Alice thought that if the ghosts of these poor natives could haunt the authorities, such an army of shadows would soon prevail to secure for their surviving countrymen the food which Providence had made to superabound before their eyes. She knew how shocked and sorry government was that a woman here and there burned herself when her husband died; but when government burned the salt which was left, in order to keep up the price, Alice thought, and so did her father, that government was destroying more lives than ever perished on piles kindled by native hands.

"But pepper, papa: the king of Candy can grow his own pepper in his own woods, I suppose; for it seems as if it would grow anywhere here, as long as there are trees for it to hang upon. I see the pepper vine dangling in the woods, wherever I go; and the monkeys throw the red clusters at each other."

"The monkeys may gather them, but the men and women may not, unless they are employed to do so by the government. The monkeys cannot pay for pepper, and some of the people can; therefore the people who cannot must go without, or steal, and run the risk of being punished."

"Poor people!"

"Miserably poor, indeed. If they were allowed to grow as much pepper as they pleased, and sell it to any part of the world where it is wished for, they would have a great deal of money wherewith to buy things which the government could sell much more profitably than pepper. Then we should see mats, strewed with pepper-corns, spread in many a nook of the thickets which the panther and the snake now have all to themselves; and many a child would be heard singing among the vines, which now moans its little life away in its half-starved mother's arms. The same may be said of cardamoms. There is no one in these eastern countries who would not eat cardamoms if he could get them; and there are endless tracts where cardamoms would grow; and yet very few of the natives can obtain them to eat. Cardamoms grow wherever vegetable ashes are found in this country. The plant naturally springs up on the very spots where other precious things have been burned before the people's eyes; but the plant must be rooted up, or its capsules left to be avoided as forbidden fruit, unless offered to the government for sale. But government gives so

low a price for cardamoms, that the people have little heart to cultivate the plant."

"But what does the government do with cardamoms?"

"It sells them; but not to half so many people as would be glad to buy. If government would let the people freely sell cardamoms, government would have a people rich enough to pay more in taxes than government will ever make by selling cardamoms."

"But you said the people might not have cinnamon. How can any body prevent their getting it? Look all round, papa. As far as we can see on this side and on that, and a great way before us, it is one wood of cinnamon."

"Yes, my dear. This one garden is fifteen miles round."

"Well, why cannot the people steal as much as they please? If I were a poor native, I would cut down all I could get, and sell enough to make a great deal of money, and then buy what I wished for."

"As for the cutting it down, my dear, the natives would have little scruple; for, like all people who are cruelly pinched, they are apt to take what they can get without caring to whom it belongs. But how are they to sell it when they have got it?"

"I thought you said that cinnamon grew scarcely anywhere in the world but here; and I am sure there are plenty of people all over the world who are fond of it, and would be glad to buy it."

"Very true; but those who long to sell and

those who long to buy cannot get at each other. Somebody steps between to prevent the bargain. The English government lets the East India Company have all the cinnamon you see, on condition of the Company paying so much a-year. So the spice is carried away to be sold, instead of foreign nations being allowed to come here to buy ; and none is left but that which the Company does not think it worth while to carry away ; and even that is sometimes burned to keep up the price."

" Burned ! when so many people would be glad of it ! Would not the common people in England like it, if they could get it as cheap as salt ? If they did, they would make the fortunes of the people here."

" And then the people here would make the fortunes of a great many of the working people in England. This would certainly be the case.—What do you think the people in England eat most of, Alice ?"

" Bread, I suppose."

" Yes ; and salt comes next. And what next ? —Another sort of seasoning."

It was not pepper, nor mustard ; but something that every body liked and used,—from the infant that will leave sucking its thumb for it, to the old man that has but one tooth left in his head ;—from the king who lets his queen put it into his coffee, to the labourer's wife who carries home a coarse sample of it on the Saturday night.

" That must be sugar. But I think almost every thing that is good with sugar would be

better with cinnamon ; and if cinnamon was made very cheap, what a quantity would be used, and how rich the growers might be ! They would grow more and more, and employ more people, till this whole large island was one great cinnamon garden—”

“ Every part of it that is fit for such a purpose ; every part that has a light dry sandy soil like that which we are riding over so pleasantly. And then much more use would be made of the rest of the land, the richer the inhabitants grew. There would be more rice, and more fruits, and more dye-woods, and more timber, and more of all the useful and beautiful things that this paradise will produce.”

Alice wondered that the whole world did not cry out for more cinnamon ; and her father agreed with her that such a cry would probably be raised, if the greater part of the world did but know how good cinnamon is. They never could have known, or they would not so easily agree to go without it, for the sake of the pockets of the East India Company.

“ The fact is, my dear, the Company and the government do not behave so ill as some people did before them. The cinnamon trade is a very old trade ;—as old as the time when the wise and wealthy Egyptians used to trade with the rich and barbarous princes of India ; but, though this trade has passed through many hands, there has never been liberty to buy and sell as natural wants and wishes rise. Three hundred years ago, the Portuguese came here, and drove out the

turbaned Moors, and sold cinnamon at their own price to the world, (and let the natives have none of the benefit of it,) for more than a hundred and thirty years. Then came the Dutch to take the matter out of the hands of the Portuguese, and they let the world have a little and a little more, by degrees, till they prepared the way for a fine commerce for us, if we had but known how to make use of it. But the mistake of the government of England is in letting nobody have the spice who will not buy of us and pay our price for it; when it is very plain that their money would come round to England at last; and in much greater plenty, if we let the natives grow and the foreigners buy of them, as much as they pleased."

" Those poor people who are peeling, and stopping their songs as we pass, and looking so terribly afraid of us, seem as if they were not fit to make a bargain, papa."

" They would soon learn, my dear, if left to manage their own interest. At present, they know very well how to steal, but very little how to conduct a fair bargain. The Cingalese come begging and praying, almost on their knees, that we will buy; and if we condescend to ask their prices, they name twice as much as they mean to take; and if we choose to give them only half what they might really look for, they cannot help themselves: or if we have a fancy to pay them in betel-nut, or tobacco, or cotton-cloth, or anything else we may want to get rid of, they have nothing to do

but to take it, or to carry back their commodity as they brought it. These people, however,—these peelers, have nothing to sell."

" When we get among the cocoa groves, papa, there are several cottages, and the people bring out things to sell. I wish you would buy something this morning ; just to see how they will manage, poor things ! But who is this, papa ? He looks grander than the modelier, with his gay petticoat and his blue dress. I do-believe this is Captain Cinnamon, as the peelers call him."

" It is. He is the chief of the peelers, and he is taking his morning round, as we are. I will speak to him."

Captain Cinnamon bent his turbaned head in a profound obeisance to the little girl, as well as to her father, which the young lady returned as if she had been the far-famed pearl queen of the olden time. Alice's father and mother were more amused than they ought to have been at the airs of consequence she assumed among the natives, and did not discourage the haughtiness with which she naturally returned their homage. Mr. Carr's own manner, adapted to those he had to deal with, was a bad example for her.

" I'll tell you what, captain, you must take more care of your charge. I am certain there is a great deal of pilfering going on in this garden, and you are answerable to the Company for it."

The captain was all humility : but how should there be thefts ? For what purpose, as the peelers could not sell this commodity.

" But others besides peelers may help themselves, and do."

“The English gentlemen from the fort ride through the garden,” modestly suggested the captain.

“Nonsense! do you suppose they steal cinnamon? I tell you I saw a head pop up yonder, and a motion among the shrubs, where neither cutting nor barking is going on: look there, and you will find a thief, depend upon it.”

The captain owned that, secure as the Company was of no interference with their monopoly of the bark while the garden was under his care, it was difficult to prevent persons from entering to pluck the fruit. It was so easy to pull and carry away the fruit unobserved, and it was so precious to the people, and of so little use to the Company, that Mr. Carr’s predecessor had connived at the practice, and desired Captain Cinnamon to do so too. As Mr. Carr thought differently, however, the peasants of the jungle should be humbled beneath his feet. In a trice, half a score of peelers were called from their work to hunt the thief; and a grand show of zeal they made in beating among the shrubs, and uttering cries.

“There, that will do,” said Mr. Carr, when Alice had pointed out the gradual retreat of the moving thing (as shown by the twitching of the bushes) towards the ditch which bounded the garden. “This will frighten him: now let him escape.”

Little Alice now signified her will and pleasure to be informed what was to become of the quantity of bark which was strewed before her eyes. Wherever there was a space between the

shrubs where the sun could penetrate to the pure white sand from which the spicy stems sprang, mats were spread; and on these mats were strewed and heaped rolls of the bark, the smaller rolls being fitted into the larger, so as to contain a great quantity of the commodity in a small bulk.—On some open plots which they had already passed, other such mats, heaped with other such rolls, had greeted the senses of Alice and her father; and wherever they caught glimpses through side alleys of the wood, or reached an eminence whence they could look abroad over the expanse of shrubs, they saw dark forms squatted on the white sand, or gemmed heads rising amidst the verdure, while the rich scent which declared their occupation diffused itself through the still air. Though the hands of the workmen moved languidly, (like the hands of other workmen who do not labour for themselves,) though the process of peeling was clumsy, and the waste of material excessive, yet such quantities of bark fell from innumerable boughs and twigs that Alice could not imagine what was to be done with it all.

Captain Cinnamon told her (with obeisances which were imitated and multiplied by his throng of followers) that all this quantity of spice awaited the disposal of her puissant father, the agent of the Honourable Company; and that he would probably inform her that when he had caused to be packed that which his wisdom should deem the proper quantity to be vouchsafed for the use of the world, the rest would receive its sentence

of destruction or distribution from his lips. Alice held up her head, and rode on, not quite understanding the matter of fact about which she had inquired, but thinking that it would be below the dignity of so great a man's daughter to appear to need further information.

The throng of attendants hovered round them as long as they continued within the verge of the garden—pointing out to the young lady here a little stack of cinnamon awaiting the hands of the packers; and there kneeling groups, with each a chest in the centre, a heap of black pepper lying beside it, to strew between the layers of cinnamon, and pots of resin wherewith to stop the seams and crevices of the chests. Alice could not help learning much from what she saw, notwithstanding the sudden start of pride which made her prefer issuing commands to asking questions. She felt a sad loss of consequence when her father dismissed the peelers to their proper business, on reaching the ditch which divided the garden from the open country. She was now no more than Alice Carr, riding before her father, as she remembered having done long ago in a field of grandmama's in England, where there were no black people to make bows, and gather round her as if she were a princess.

She complained of the narrowness of the path through the close jungle, and was sorry that they were leaving the lake farther and farther on one side of them; but it was not long before she found that there was here something to admire. Grandmama's horses had never trod

such a path as that on which her steed was now pacing: they had never entangled their feet in trails of the blue convolvulus, or bowed their heads to avoid being garlanded with creepers,—now scarlet, now yellow, now white. They would have started at the glittering snakes that wound in the grass, and at the monkeys that hung by one arm from the boughs overhead, gibbering and chattering in a way that must move all unaccustomed gazers to perpetual laughter. Instead of one proud peacock, perched upon a wall, to be gazed at by a populous neighbourhood, here were numbers of those stately creatures, fanning the long grass as they spread their burnished tails, or making their rich purple hues gleam from beneath the shades of the bowery fig-tree. Nothing could be more unlike the cottages of England than the dwellings which emerged upon the sight, here and there, from their hiding-places among the verdure. These dwellings looked as if they were part and parcel of the jungle, being formed of the wood and leaves that grew there, fenced with shrubs, and decked with creepers, which twisted themselves over every part, so as scarcely to leave room for the squirrels to pop in and out from their holes in the leafy thatch. The enclosed plots (where any cottage could boast such an acquisition) were as little like the gardens of a civilized country. No rows of cabbages and peas, no beds of potatoes and onions—no supply of vegetables on which a family may depend as some security against starvation. The Cingalese, though blest

with a soil and climate in which every thing will grow, are destitute of any such provision as a tenth of the toil of an English labourer would secure, and as a single gem from the necklace of a native would purchase, in almost any land that has not the misfortune to be a monopolized colony. If any one in Ceylon has a fancy for potatoes and onions, he must get them from Bombay. If his ambition extends to peas and cabbages, he must wait till they can be brought from England.

The shaddock, the plantain, and the jack-fruit, might be seen growing within these enclosures, the little walks being spread with a covering as bright and as curiously variegated as any mosaic pavement, and as soft as the richest carpet. Moss,—the scarlet, crimson, brown, yellow, green, moss of Ceylon,—“the jewellers’ sorrow,” as it is there called, from its beauty surpassing any which the combinations of the lapidary can produce, was tufted beneath the stems, and spread under the feet. Instead of thieves of the air, hovering in awe of the scarecrow which flaps and nods in an English breeze, here were four-footed pilferers peeping with longing looks from neighbouring tree-tops, or swinging themselves down from a convenient branch, or pushing out what looked very like a human hand, to pluck, or to grub up whatever might be within reach, while the switch of the owner was absent. Instead of the lowing of cows from the farm-yard, and the cawing of rooks from the rustling trees, and the cackle of geese from the bare pond on the common, there was the chit-chat of monkeys,

the screaming of parrots, the timid step of the gazelle among the dry twigs, and the splash of teal and wild ducks from the pool beneath the mangroves. Alice was obliged to be content with tracking the deer with her eye; but at the sound of water, she must turn aside and see whence it came, notwithstanding the fear with which her father ever approached, or allowed any belonging to him to approach, water in these swampy wildernesses. Just for one moment he thought his little daughter might be permitted to look around her; but when he had penetrated a little farther into the shade, he repented of his compliance. A fallen tree had intercepted the course of the tiniest rivulet that ever was seen, and had formed a pool, which had spread and spread, till it had made an island of one tree after another, and was now canopied with a green shade, and mantled with the lotus, and fringed with the bull-rush, from among which rose the cry of waterfowl, and rainbow visions of gigantic dragon-flies. Notwithstanding all this beauty, Mr. Carr repented of having penetrated these shades, so heavy felt the air, and so oppressive was the moist smell of decaying vegetation. A woman was stooping in the grass, too, whose looks did not reassure him. Fever or hunger had sunk her cheek, and given such languor to her gait and gestures as to destroy the grace which co-exists to a remarkable degree with the indolence of demeanour which distinguishes the natives of the country.

“That is very like one of grandmama’s hens,”

observed Alice, as the tawny lady disentangled a fowl from the snare in the grass, and held the fluttering bird against her bosom. "I could almost fancy that was one of the fowls I used to feed in the poultry-yard."

"Look at the cock, and you will see the difference," replied her father. "See what a lofty, steady flight he takes half way up that tree, whose lowest branch would allow your grand-mama's sycamore to stand under it. Look at the gay, glossy plumage of each fowl, and tell me if you ever saw such on an English cock and hen. These are the jungle-fowl you have heard me speak of as a great blessing to the natives. I hardly know what some of them would do for food without jungle-fowl."

"That woman looks as if she had not been eating any," observed Alice. "She looks as if she had had nothing good to eat this long while."

So thought Mr. Carr; and he stopped to ask her if the trees under which she dwelt were fruitful? Marana (for it was she) replied, that her husband and she could generally get cocoa-nuts when they were hungry, but that they had sickened many times under this diet, during the short time that they had been in the jungle. Her husband's strength had wasted, and she had had the ague; and it was but seldom that she could snare a fowl.

Did not her husband bring home game, or earn money, or grow rice?

He brought home little game, for want of

means to take it. He could not grow rice, as he had neither land nor seed ; and as for earning money, how was it possible for a stranger to do so, when so many residents were already unemployed ?

“ It is true,” replied Mr. Carr, “ that the gardens are very full of people, some of whom make more show of working than do any good ; but still——”

Marana was too courteous to interrupt his speech ; but when he had paused for some time to think, she declared that her husband must not be supposed to desire to have anything to do with the Challias, or cinnamon-peelers. Rayo was of the fishermen’s caste.

“ Well, you must settle it between you which is the highest caste. If you differ among yourselves on such a point, a foreigner cannot be expected to decide it. But why does your husband, being a fisherman, come to live here ? Why does not he try his chance among the pearl fishers ?”

“ There are too many there, as well as in the gardens,” replied Marana.

“ Too many for what ?” inquired Alice. “ There cannot be more men than pearls. Why cannot they take it in turns to fish ? And then, if only one pearl was paid to every man, there would be plenty left for the rich men who do not fish.”

“ Ay ; but then captains and merchants from many nations would come : and that is just what our government does not like. A French mer-

chant would carry away pearls, and leave silk dresses behind him, or money, with which the Cingalese might lay out rice-fields and cotton plantations, or stock meadows with cattle. The Dutch captain would go to some neighbouring countries for grain, and would be paid in pearls. The Russian would bring leather and corn, and carry away pearls. The Englishman would bring iron, and clothing of cotton, and a hundred comforts besides, and would make a profitable bargain of pearls."

" But this would be a good thing for everybody,—for the ladies who want more pearls, and for these poor people, who want employment, and food, and clothing."

" But the government must then leave off paying as little as it likes to the pearl-fishers, and being the only party to sell the fair white pearls of Ceylon to all the beautiful ladies in the world who can afford to obtain them."

" But there are plenty of princes and great men who would give away more pearls as presents, if they could get them; and there must be plenty of beautiful ladies who cannot get pearls, because they are very dear. I should like to give these people a boat, and send them out to fish pearls for some of the ladies, who would give a little less for their pearls, but quite enough to make Rayo rich,—to buy him a rice-ground."

" Though the fisher and the buyer are ready, and the boat may soon be had, Rayo must do without his rice-ground. The government will

not give him leave to sell pearls to anybody but themselves, and they will not pay enough to buy a rice-ground."

At the first sound of buying and selling, Marana had disappeared within the cottage. She came forth again with her right-handed chank, which she offered to Alice for sale, with a sad and imploring look.

"It is a pity you should sell this shell," observed Mr. Carr. "It is a very valuable one, as you ought to know."

"It is."

"Then keep it,—it may be a little fortune to you some day."

"We want rice, and my husband's clothing is old."

"Well, food and dress are of more importance than any shell, to be sure."

Than any shell but this, Marana thought; but when the idea arose of the hag, and her threat of leprosy, and of the curse which might now pursue Rayo, she doubted whether anything could be more important to her than this charmed shell. Whether the curse had not already lighted upon Rayo, she was doubtful; for never man was so changed. He was as smooth and courteous in his manner to strangers as formerly, and as fond of her as he had ever been; but he was not the indolent, careless, light-hearted youth he had been when she had first known him on the coast. He did not work, for there was no work for him to do but to scramble up a tree and down again when he wanted a coco-nut;

but he prowled about the neighbourhood, and seemed to have some purpose which lay nearer to his heart than his wife. Marana hoped that he was not bewitched or doomed ; but it always alarmed her to meet him unawares in the thicket, and to see how full his mind was of some thought which the hardships of the day and the fever of the night could not banish.

While Alice was handling the shell, and longing more and more for it, as she observed the solicitude with which Marana watched her mode of playing with it, a rustling was heard in the wood, and Rayo himself burst from the covert, with a rude sort of basket in his arms, which seemed to be filled with the fruit of the cinnamon shrub. At the unexpected sight of a stranger, he turned quickly, and deposited his load in the long grass behind him. While his back was turned, his wife made a rapid sign to her visitors to hide the chank, and say nothing about it, which sign Mr. Carr obeyed by pocketing the shell, and slipping into Marana's hand gold, which made a warm blush visible on her dark cheek, and lighted up her dim eyes with a momentary gleam. She had never held so much money in her hand at one time before ; and the idea of the hag vanished for the instant before the image of a basket of steaming rice, stewed with cardamoms or peppercorns.

" We must have a lamp," (half-whispered Marana, observing that Mr. Carr sent a searching glance after the acorn-like fruit that was turned over in the grass. " And if Marana is

not anointed, how should her husband love her?"

This was a question which Mr. Carr's European habits unfitted him for answering. He asked if there was no method of obtaining the oil of the cinnamon fruit but by pilfering from the garden? None, for poor creatures so weak as these peasants, who could not penetrate into the interior for such purposes. The garden was close at hand; the cocoa-nut oil, with which the oil of the cinnamon fruit was to be mixed, hung overhead; and the temptation was too strong to allow of Mr. Carr's being very angry. He asked how the oil was made to serve the purpose of a lamp during the dark nights, when it became the office of the invalids to watch and nurse each other? Marana produced her lamp,—half the shell of a cocoa-nut, supported on a stick of ebony, which was stuck into a little block of calaminda wood. On the surface of the oil which the shell contained, floated a little wick, formed from the pith of a rush. Nothing could be more primitive; few things more elegant; and the materials were such as would in few other countries have been found in the habitation of persons in want of proper food.

Alice was bent upon purchasing the lamp also; and small was the price demanded, however Marana might wonder at her husband's demand not being so much as disputed. Busily did she attempt to fulfil her task of making another lamp, and bruising the fruit from which the oil was to be drained, while Rayo seemed to have a sudden fancy for making torches.

Meantime, Mr. Carr cleared the jungle ; and, seeing that the sky was blackening towards the west, as if with the first storms of the monsoon, turned his horse's head homeward, bestowing many a thought on the natives whom he saw in field, garden, jungle, and road,—all obsequious, and looking up to every Englishman they met, as if impressed with profound gratitude; while most were poor and comfortless, and it was certain that all were injured by the nominal protection of their country. Even Alice, occupied as she was with looking about her for homage, and with planning an exhibition of her two treasures to her mother, could not wholly forget the sunken countenances of those who appeared to be pining in the luxuriant region which she had just left, and where Nature seemed to intend that all things should flourish.

CHAPTER IV.

NIGHT IN THE JUNGLE.

ALMOST all who lived to the west of Adam's Peak looked with glad eyes to the lowering sky which hung over the sea like a leaden canopy. The rains came late this year; the rice-fields languished; the verdure seemed to crave of the light clouds which floated around the mountain-tops that they would descend in showers. There

was now a prospect of rain in abundance, and all looked for it with impatience but Marana, to whose troubled spirit the moaning of the rising wind in the trees, and the dull roar of the distant sea spoke of hags riding the blast, and curses cradled in the clouds. As she sat this evening at the door of her hut, weaving a basket of cane which her own hands had cut, dried, and split, she glanced up uneasily to the sky, where the twilight was being rapidly quenched by the rolling vapours, and started at every fire-fly that brushed past her, as if it had been a spark from the electric mass which overhung the entire region. When it was no longer possible to pursue her occupation, for want of light, she crossed her arms, and remained seated on her threshold. It was not that she watched for the flitting forth of the bat; nor to see the gaudier winged creatures of the wood nestle in the brakes; nor to see the moonbeams piercing a way for themselves through the curtain of foliage till they kissed the modest lotus that slept on the bosom of the water; nor to mark the vigilant stars resume their watch, rising, some like mute sentinels, others in full constellation like trained bands, to look down from their blue height upon all that moved and breathed below. There was no visible kindling of golden fires in the firmament this night; no winging home of a belated bird; and the water-lilies were left to themselves. It was to watch for some opening in the clouds which might let down air and light, that Marana still sat abroad. She felt half stifled with heat,

and with a vague fear, and dreaded kindling a light, and closing the entrance for the night.—Rayo was still behind the dwelling, tying up bunches of cocoa-nut leaves to burn, and splitting resinous woods into torches. When the twilight expired, he was there. When the black darkness had descended a full hour, he was lighting himself through the wood with one of his new torches.

“ It is time to close the door against the panther,” said he to Marana, before he set forth. “ Spread the mat and sleep, when you have prayed to St. Anthony for me.”

“ And you? will you not kneel to pray on the same mat?”

“ I have a prayer to say some way off which no one may overhear. So go in, and trust to my returning,—before day-break, if not in darkness.”

“ O, do not bring any more curses, Rayo, by taking what is not ours. Here is money to buy grain in the harbour, and—”

“ Money!” exclaimed Rayo. “ Your friend Amoottra must have brought you money. Does it not taint your fingers with leprosy, Marana?”

She let the money fall in a fit of horror; but when her husband laughed a laugh which must have been highly offensive to any hag who might happen to be within hearing, Marana conjured him to do nothing to remind the foe of her expecting victim. Rayo had superstition enough in him to induce him to take the hint, though not sufficient to prevent his searching for

she dropped money by the light of his torch, and being very glad to pick it up from the brown, crumbling turf where it had fallen. In vain Marana entreated to be permitted to carry the torch for her husband. In vain she urged the desirableness of her being at hand to sing the "Hail!" to the first burst of the season's thunder. She was commanded to pray and sleep, and dream of the verdure which might possibly have overspread the rice-fields before the morning.

She ventured, however, to steal out on the track of Rayo's footsteps. The risk of falling in with a leopard or a tiger-cat while she carried no torch was nothing in comparison with the uncertainty as to what was being done or undergone by her husband. She had been his companion on the raft one night, and in his flight through the woods on another; and now he went out alone, and in silence as to his object. She feared that this reserve argued something more than care for her health; some desperation of design too great to be confided even to her. She blamed herself for all. Some immediate misfortune was, she believed, to follow her impious act of the morning; and all her husband's sins, from his withdrawal of confidence from her, to whatever act he might be now about to perpetrate, must be answered for by her. She went out to watch, as an unpractised magician may be supposed to await the results of his first spell, in a state of expectation made wretched by horror and fear.

She followed Rayo's steps at such a distance that she could not herself have been perceived, if

he had chanced to look behind him ; but the torch which he carried before him marked the outlines of his figure very distinctly, as the light was reflected from the roof of foliage upon his anointed limbs, from which nearly the last remains of his garments were dropping in rags. When he emerged from the shade, on reaching the ditch which surrounded the cinnamon garden, he slackened his pace, as if meditating the method by which he might go straightest to some fixed point which he had in his eye. He turned to the left. Marana turned to the left likewise, keeping under the shadow of the wood. He stopped, and looked up to the sky. She could not so raise her eyes, for the heavens at that moment opened, and let out a flood of lightning, from which a self-condemned person like herself could not but shrink. Again and again came the lightning, sustaining the awful alternation by which the landscape appeared one moment wrapt in midnight darkness, and the next in noon-day glare. Crashing thunder then came, peal upon peal, driving her from her perilous station under the trees to a more open part of the jungle, where she stood fearfully glancing about her in a sort of expectation that every object within sight would rise up against her, and come crowding about her ; for the thunder was enough to waken the dead, and no suspicion crossed her mind that this storm was not especially directed against herself. Rayo's operations did not seem to be impeded by it. He had crossed the ditch while Marana had covered her eyes, and in the

intervals of the lightning, the dancing spark of his torch might be seen wandering, like a will-o'-the-wisp, at a greater and a greater distance. It was not long before it became evident to his wife whither and for what purpose he was gone. Little puffs of dun smoke arose, like fire-balloons, from behind the dark-leaved shrubbery which he had entered. A delicious scent pervaded the region as the fire spread, like airs from heaven finding their way among blasts from hell. It was plain that Rayo was setting fire to the bark which was in course of being harvested.

What might be his fate if he fell into the hands of the challias, Marana dared not think. If he could but creep away under the bushes, and leave it to be supposed that lightning had been the agent of mischief, she could rejoice as heartily as he in the discomfiture of the presumptuous challias, and the loss suffered by the strangers who, under the pretence of protection, were perpetually employed in rifling the land of its treasures, and depressing the condition of the natural owners of those treasures. She would have rejoiced to see every twig in this vast garden consumed, if such destruction could avail to drive away the Honourable Company who, by right of purchase, interfered to limit the production, restrict the commerce, and therefore impoverish the condition of those from whom they derived their wealth. If this Company could but be driven from its monopoly, so that every man might plant cinnamon in his garden, and sit under its shadow with none to make him afraid,

he who this night carried the fire-brand might be set up for worship on a higher eminence (if such could be found) than Adam's Peak, and be feasted and garlanded daily, instead of, like the holy Footmark, once a year.

What Rayo's fate was it was impossible to conjecture, all watching and listening being now baffled by the commotion of the storm. Smoke arose after awhile in a second place, then in a third, thus marking the progress of the incendiary. There were only a few spikes of clear flame visible. Each heap of bark must be presently consumed, and the shrubs were too moist to be in danger of more than a singeing from the fire. The most obvious thing to the anxious wife was to follow her husband; and more than once she attempted to move: but, at first, her wasted limbs failed her, and then she thought she perceived tokens of an approaching earthquake. A wind like this had often, in her recollection, brought down some massy distant tree, whose fall shook the ground for many a rood; but now, either many such trees were falling, or some other cause prolonged the vibration. She expected an earthquake, during which the hag would arise, or she herself be swallowed up by some chasm that would open beneath her feet. Suddenly the shaking ceased, and a flash disclosed to her a horrible vision at hand which explained all. Fiery eyes blazed, and white tusks gleamed over the tallest of the shrubs which grew to the left of the place where she stood. She had just seen the twisting of the

lithe trunk which could carry her up twenty feet in an instant, and she now heard the snuffing and snorting before which every living thing within many furlongs must be quaking like herself. She felt before the elephant like a worm in the path of a cruel schoolboy,—as certain that the ponderous tread would be directed to crush her; and when the next gleam showed the bulky head and shoulders of this moving mass veering round to face her, she could only pray that she might be annihilated by one tread, instead of being made fatal sport of high in the air.

Rayo proved her unintentional deliverer. The fire he had kindled did not catch the "green shrubs; but some flakes were carried off by the wind, and fell among the parched grass near the outskirts of the plantation. There were in an instant rivulets of fire running beneath the stems, joining and parting, according to the quantity of fuel which lay in their way. Every morsel of oily bark casually dropped the day before, now sent up its tiny jet of blue flame; the dried twigs snapped and kindled, and the gleaming ditch was the boundary-line between the darkness and the light. This fire was as unwelcome to the wild elephant beyond its reach as to the burnished snakes that came wriggling out into the blaze as their holes grew too hot to hold them. He turned short round with a troubled cry, and distanced the scene at his quickest trot, wakening the birds as he brushed their covert in his passage, and leaving far behind the scared elk that burst a way among the stems,

and the hyenas that hushed their cry and skulked in the thickets. To the mind of a Cingalese, the elephant of Ceylon is the most majestic of all animals, the elephants of all other countries being reported to acknowledge its supremacy by a salam; but this emperor of the beasts was now put to flight by the same means that made the gazelle palpitate in its hiding place among the grass.

The alarm was soon at an end. The canopy of clouds descended, lower and lower, till there seemed small breathing space left between them and the earth, and then burst, quenching the lightning and the flame at once, drowning the thunder, and threatening to plunge the island in the sea. When the sheet of water had descended for a while, the ditch overflowed, the snakes raised themselves on end, the waters found their way into the lair of every couchant beast, and dripped from the plumage of every bird on its perch. To wade through the jungle in this pitchy darkness immediately after the dazzling apparition of the cinnamon garden had vanished, was impossible. Marana remained clinging to a tree, the creepers from which dangled wet in her face, till she heard the sound of a quiet laugh through the flash and down-pour. "Here is the hag, at last," thought she, expecting to feel the loathsome touch which she was persuaded she must encounter sooner or later. Her agonized cry for mercy produced another laugh, but a kindly one. It was from her husband.

“ Rayo ! what a storm !”

“ St. Anthony rides the monsoon this year,” replied Rayo. “ Do you know what the lightning has done in the garden ? The Company have been praying for the monsoon for their neighbours’ sake. In the morning you will hear how they complain of it for their own.”

“ Was it all the storm, Rayo ?”

“ They will tell you so in the morning. Come home now. I will take you by a path where the waters cannot beat you down like the dragon-fly, nor carry you away like the squirrel that is caught far from its hole. But I forbade your coming abroad. You were afraid to await the hag under a roof, I suppose. If she must come, I wish it might be in the morning. She would see in the garden that which would make her so merry that she would forget you.”

“ Can you say your prayers to keep off the curse to-night, Rayo ? Dare you ?”

“ O, yes ; and quickly, that I may sleep, and be early ready to see the Challias collect in the garden.”

In the morning, before Marana’s longague-fit had given place to sleep, her husband was on the spot of the late cinnamon harvest. The sky was not clear of clouds, large masses still being in act of rising from the east ; but a mild sunshine burnished the scene ; the rose-coloured peaks of the distant mountains,—the fresh-springing verdure of the fields which were so lately brown,—and the multitudes of winged creatures that flitted, hovered, and sailed in the balmy air.

All was as fair in the interval of the storms as if no storm had ever been. It was much more the faces to Rayo to see no signs of storm in wonderful of those who were most concerned in the loss of the cinnamon. Mr. Carr looked not only free from anger towards the lightning to which he attributed the destruction, but satisfied and pleased at the existing state of things.

"The lightning has saved the Company from the curses of the people," he heard Captain Cinnamon whisper to a modelier of the garden: "There was too good a crop this year; and if some of it must be burned, it was very well that accident should do it."

"And that accident should have burned more than the Company would have dared to destroy in the face of the natives. Now they may put their own price upon their bark; and a pretty price it will be, to judge by Mr. Carr's pleased face."

"Not that he wishes ill to the natives, or to the eaters of cinnamon in other lands. But he is thinking of the good news he has to send to his employers."

Rayo rolled himself in the sand when he thus learned what was the result of his enterprise.

CHAPTER V.

MATERNAL ECONOMY.

If the drought had been confined to the western coast of Ceylon, its effects would have been very deplorable, from the poverty of the people, though, from their being in the habit of the regular importation of rice, they were more sure of some extent of supply than if they had been dependent on their own scanty crops. But this year, the drought extended to some of the districts of the neighbouring country, from which rice was annually imported to a large amount. This, again, would have mattered little, if the inhabitants had had the means of purchasing from a greater distance ; but these means could not be within the reach of a colony whose productions were monopolized by the mother country. Hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants of Ceylon who, if allowed the usual inducements to an accumulation of capital, would have been in common times purchasers of the innumerable comforts which the world yields, and in the worst seasons placed far above the reach of want, were reduced by a single delay of the monsoon to such a condition as rendered it doubtful whether they would ever be purchasers of anything. Again, want of capital was the grievance from which all other temporal grievances arose in this region of natural wealth and super-

abundant beauty ; and this want of capital was caused by the diversion of labour from its natural channels, through the interference of the evil spirit of monopoly.

Streams ran down from the mountains ; and on either side of the streams were levels which lay waste and bare for want of irrigation ; and on the banks of these streams lived a population which subsisted on unwholesome and unseasoned or deficient food. These waters could not be made useful, these plains could not be fertilized ; these people could not be fed, because the natural wealth of the country was not permitted to create capital to the inhabitants.

The cotton-tree might be met with growing luxuriantly wherever the hand of man or of nature had caused it to take root ; yet those who lived within reach of its boughs hid themselves in the woods for the scantiness of their clothing, or went without some other necessary, in order to furnish themselves expensively with cotton-cloth which had been woven four thousand miles off. That it should be woven where it was, and sold where it was, was well ; but that the purchasers should not have the raw materials to exchange for the wrought, or something else to offer which should not leave them destitute, spoke ill for the administrators of their affairs.

Potters' clay abounded in the intervals between soils which offered something better ; and here and there a rude workman was seen "working his work on the wheel," as in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, and marring the clay, and

making another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter. It would have seemed good to him to make better vessels, to improve his craft, and bring up his children to the art, and supply households at greater distance with utensils, and get wealth and contentment, but that he had no money to spend on improvements, and that if his children tried to get any, they could find no free scope for their enterprize.

Herds of buffaloes were seen feeding amidst the rank vegetation of the hills, and many a peasant would have gone among them, morning and evening, with his bottle of hide slung over his shoulder; and many a maiden with her vase poised upon her head, if a free commerce in ghee had been permitted with the Arabs who must drink a cupfull of it every morning, and with the multitude of dwellers in the Eastern Archipelago, who want it for anointings, for food, for sacrifice, and other purposes which now cost them dear. But the buffaloes might graze in peace, the peasants being permitted to sell ghee only to those who could not buy, or who did not consume ghee.

There were cocoa-nut fibres enough to spin a coir rope which might measure the equator; but coir was so taxed, as soon as it became rope, that the government need have little fear that any one would buy but itself and those who could get no cheaper cordage.

Chay-root, yielding the red dye which figures on Indian chintzes, spread itself far and wide through the light dry soil near the coast. How

it should hurt the British government that all nations should have red roses on their chintzes had not been satisfactorily explained ; but it was the will of that government that few should do so. The government bought up every ounce of chay-root which its Cingalese subjects were obliging enough to sell. There was much loyalty in thus furnishing chay-root ; the diggers being paid a good deal less than half the price which the government demanded from its purchasers.

The fragrance of spices was borne on every breeze ; shells of various beautiful forms were thrown up by every tide ; tortoiseshell might be had for the trouble of polishing, and ivory for that of hunting the elephant ; arrack flowed for any one who would set it running from the tree ; canes to make matting and baskets were trodden down from their abundance ; the topaz and the amethyst, the opal, the garnet, the ruby, and the sapphire, jet, crystal, and pearls, were strewed as in fairy-land ; the jack-wood, rivalling the finest mahogany, ebony, satin-wood, and the finely-veined calaminda, grew like thorns in the thicket ; yet the natural proprietors of this wealth, to which the world looked with longing eyes, were half-fed and not clothed ; and their English fellow-subjects, located in a far less favourable habitation, were taxed to afford them such meagre support as they had.

The world had rolled back with the Cingalese. Monuments were before them at every step, which showed that their country had been more populous than now, and their forefathers more

prosperous than themselves. They were now too many for their food—too many for the labour which their rulers vouchsafed to call for; yet they were but a million and a half on a territory which had sustained in more comfort a much greater number, without taxing a distant nation to give unproductive aid to a puny people, and before the advantages of national interchange had been fully ascertained. There were traces of times, before the English artizan was called upon to contribute his mite to his tawny brother over the sea; before the government complained of the expense of its colony; before murmurs arose about the scanty supply of cinnamon, while the Honourable Company was claiming compensation for an over-supply; before the rulers at Columbo began to be at their wit's end to find means for keeping up their credit; before the expenditure of the colony so far exceeded its revenue, as that the inquiry began among certain wise ones, where was the great advantage of having a colony which, however rich in name and appearance, cost more than it produced: there were traces of happier times, when the world seemed to have been wiser, however younger, than at present; or when the Cingalese had been under a wiser sway than that which was now calling upon them for perpetual submission and gratitude. The Dutch might have been hard task-masters; but it was now felt that the English were yet more so; and however much submission might be yielded, because it could not be refused, there was small room for

gratitude, as any one would have admitted who could have drawn an accurate comparison between the condition of the foreign and the native, the producing and the commercial, population of the western portion of the island during this season of hardship.

The Dutch-built houses, inhabited by foreign agents, displayed all their usual luxuries; carpeted with fragrant mats, gemmed with precious stones, perfumed with spicy oils, and supplied with food and drinks purchased by native produce from foreign lands. The huts of their humbler neighbours, meanwhile, were bare alike of furniture and food, and, for the most part, empty of inhabitants. The natives of eastern countries seem to find consolation in the open air in times of extreme hardship; not only laying their sick on the banks of rivers, but gathering together in hungry groups by the road-side or by the sea-shore, in times of famine, gazing patiently on the food which is carried before their eyes, and waiting for death as the sun goes down. Such were the groups now seen on the shores of the Lake of Columbo, and in many an open space among the spoiled paddy-fields, while the foreigners, from whom they were wont to receive their pittance, were engaged with their curries, their coffee, and their meats from many climes. Thus was it during the day; while at night the distribution of action was reversed. The foreigners slept at ease in their cooled and darkened apartments, or, if they could not rest, had nothing worse to complain of than a mosquito foe,

while their native neighbours were silently forming funeral piles along the shore ; silently bringing more wood and more from the thickets, as others of their caste dropped dead at length ; silently laying out the corpses ; silently watching them as they turned to ashes, and placing the limbs decently as they fell asunder ; silently ranging themselves so that the funeral fire played in their dark eyes, and shone on their worn and lanky frames ; silently waiting till the morning breeze puffed out the last flickering flame, and dispersed the handful of white ashes, which was all that remained of the parent who had murmured his blessing at sunset, or the wife who had whispered her farewell at midnight, or the infant whose breath had parted at the summons of the dawn. Silently were these rites performed ; insomuch that any chance-watcher in the neighbouring verandah heard no other interruption to the splash of waters than the crackling of flames, and would not have guessed that bands of patient sufferers were gathered round this fearful sacrifice to the evil spirit of monopoly — a sacrifice as far from appeasing the demon as from testifying to the willing homage of his priests. There were not among the gentle Cingalese any of the fierce passions which this demon commonly delights to unleash among his victims ; none of the envy, jealousy, and hatred with which the desperately miserable enhance their desperation and their misery. Instead of jostling one another, these sufferers sat side by side ; instead of gnashing their teeth at each other, they were altogether heedless of neigh-

bourhood ; instead of inflicting injuries, they merely ceased to confer mutual benefits. No aged man complained of violence, but sank down disappointed, when he found the water-pot—placed for the traveller's refreshment—empty by the wayside. No wearied woman murmured at being dislodged from the sheltered bench on the bridge ; but neither did those, who had niched themselves there to seek forgetfulness in sleep, stir to make way for a fellow-sufferer. No child was driven from its chance meal by a stronger arm than its own ; but neither was there a look or a word to spare for the little-ones (more tenacious of life than their parents), who crept from their dead mother to their dying father, trying in vain to suck life from the shrunken breasts of the one, and to unclose the fixed eyes of the other. Some who remained in their habitations in the woods, if less destitute, were not less miserable. If the sight and scent of the bread-fruit were too strong for the fortitude of some, they ate under the full conviction that they were exchanging famine for leprosy. Whether the belief in this effect of the fruit was right or wrong, those who believed and yet ate suffered cruelly for the want of rice. If a follower of Brama, in passing a ruin, saw a cow browsing on some pinnacle, and, in a fit of desperation, called the sacred creature down to be made food of, he found himself gnawed by the consciousness of his inexpiable crime, as fearfully as by his previous hunger. An ample importation of rice—such as might always be secured by the —

absence of restrictions on commerce—would have saved to these the pangs of conscience, till a better knowledge had had time to strike root and ripen for harvest, as it would have spared to others the agonies of hunger while their rice-grounds were awaiting the latter rains, and preparing to become fruitful again in their season. As it was, all were prevented making the most of their own soil from want of capital; and, while rendered dependent on the importation of grain, were denied the means of insuring that importation. By the exorbitant taxation of some of their articles of produce, and the prohibition to sell others to any buyer but the government, the Cingalese were deprived of all chance of securing a subsistence, and of all inducement to accumulate property.

Mrs. Carr did not know that she had ever enjoyed her way of life more, on the whole, than since she had come to Ceylon. She liked lying down for the greater part of the day, and being sure of seeing something beautiful from the verandah [when she could exert herself to look abroad from it. She liked being fanned by the punkah, and waited upon by five times as many servants as she wanted, and amused by Alice, and flattered by her husband's station; none of the trouble of which devolved upon her. But she did not know whether some friends of hers liked the place so well; she thought not, by Mr. Serle's grave manner, and the new expression of fear and anxiety in Mrs. Serle's open and happy countenance. Mr. and Mrs. Serle were Ameri-

can missionaries ; members of the little band of philanthropists who, setting the example of charity towards their Cingalese brethren, were met and cheered by the open hand of charity at every turn, till they were fairly established in the society and in the hearts of those whom they came to civilize and bless.

" I am glad you did not ask our advice about coming," observed Mrs. Carr to the missionary's wife : " we find it very pleasant in Ceylon ; but I do not know whether you find it as pleasant as we do ; and it would have been a disagreeable thing to have misled you. I am glad you did not ask our advice."

" Mrs. Serle comes to lead such a different kind of life from yours, my dear," observed her husband, " that any advice from you could have helped her little. You see and enjoy all the natural advantages of the place, which are very great indeed : Mrs. Serle comes to do what she can towards remedying the misery of the people, which is quite as remarkable in its way."

" And I beg to say that I enjoy the natural advantages of the place," replied Mrs. Serle ; " I like your Adam's Peak at sunrise, and your gay insects, and your flowery jungle, and your pine-apples as well as any of you. I do not wish to be the less sensible of these things because the people claim my compassion."

" Not the less, but rather the more," observed her husband, " that the misery of the people may be the more quickly remedied. When we find staring men in a paradise, our next busi-

ness is to find out whose fault it is that they are starving."

"They are the laziest people here," drawled Mrs. Carr; "you will hardly believe till you have been here as long as we have——"

"My dear love," interrupted her husband, "Mr. and Mrs. Serle have seen far more of the people already than you can pretend to know, living within doors as you do."

"O, but I assure you, I can tell Mrs. Serle such things as she will scarcely believe. The laziness of the people is really such as to make me wonder. Alice, love, come and tie my sandal. O, thank you, Mrs. Serle. I did not mean to trouble you, I am sure."

Mrs. Serle did not need convincing as to the indolence of the Cingalese. It was quite as evident in them as in Mrs. Carr. Neither was she much in the dark as to the causes of this indolence. The probability of a remedy was the almost hourly subject of conversation between her husband and herself.

"You are very much wanted, you see," observed Mrs. Carr; "I am sure it is a most happy thing for the poor people of this country that so many strangers come to see them and do them good. So many Dutch, formerly; and now so many English; and you and your friends from America."

"I hope you think the obligation mutual, my dear?" said her husband; "You must not forget how many Dutch and English have made their fortunes here. I say nothing about the Ameri-

cans ; for our friends here have a very different object, I fancy."

" O, it is an advantage to both parties, no doubt," observed the lady ; " I should never have had such an amethyst as this, in my cross, if Ceylon had not belonged to us, I dare say."

" And I should only have been like any other young lady, instead of having seven servants when I go out," remarked Alice.

" And our friend Belton would not have had that beautiful place of his at South Point to live in," added Mr. Carr : " yet I hear complaints—terrible complaints—from the Company, about their losses in the cinnamon trade."

" And I from some members of your government, about the expense of the colony," said Mr. Serle. " Now, if the people are acknowledged to be in a low state, if the government complains of the expense of the settlement, and if the Honourable Company cannot always make its cinnamon trade answer, who gains by Ceylon being a colony ? "

" It is usually supposed to be an advantage to an uncivilized country to be chosen for a settlement by a civilized set of people," replied Mr. Carr.

" And I have no doubt that it is so, any more than I doubt the advantage to the civilized country of having some foreign half-peopled region to which her sons may repair, to struggle, not in vain, for a subsistence. I can never doubt the policy of persons of different countries agreeing to dwell together in one, that they may yield

mutual assistance by the communication of their respective possessions and qualifications. If this assistance be yielded in a spirit of freedom, without any tyrannical exercise of the right of the strongest at the outset, this intercourse is sure to grow into a mutual and general blessing of incalculable value. If abused, by the sacrifice of the many to the supposed gain of the few, the connexion becomes an inestimable curse.”

“ To the natives, certainly,” replied Mr. Carr. “ We may observe that the prosperity of colonized countries is not to be measured by circumstances of climate, natural fertility, position, and so on, but by the policy pursued in their government. In the dreariest parts of our American colonies, for instance—I do not know whether you are acquainted with Canada?”

“ I am ; and with Nova Scotia likewise.”

“ Well ; in no part of those colonies are the natural wealth and beauty to be met with which distinguish Ceylon ; and in no part, I hope, are the labouring inhabitants to be found in so wretched a state as are too many here.”

“ Nowhere ; and I do not see that the circumstance of the labourers here being partly natives, and the rest, races long settled in the country, makes any difference in the estimate, while it is certain that they are affected by the common motives to industry and social improvement.”

“ The people here are open to such motives. Witness the growing ambition of the cinnamon peelers, in proportion as their services are in request, and are rewarded with regularity. The

Challias hold up their heads now, and dispute precedence with other castes ; and so would other labouring castes, if they had encouragement to do any better than crouch beneath the cocoanut tree, live upon what it may yield, and die when it yields no more."

" The Nova Scotian is a far more prosperous man than either the native or the settler of Ceylon, though the Nova Scotian is not yet so happy as a perfectly wise government would allow him scope to become. He is not, like our neighbours here, prevented from selling one kind of produce where he pleases, while he is discouraged in the preparation of another kind by excessive taxation. The Nova Scotian can prepare his fish, and carry it where he likes for sale."

" How rejoiced would our people be to have the same liberty with their pearls and their spice!"

" Yes : but the Nova Scotian has his trammels too, though they are far less grievous. He envies his neighbours of my country,—of the United States, as much as the Cingalese may envy him. When he has sold his fish in the wide market which the Brazils afford, he may not take in exchange any Brazilian article that will be most wanted in Nova Scotia. There are many Brazilian commodities which your government will not allow its American colonies to purchase ; so that its Nova Scotian subject must return with something of less value, or go home by a round-about way, exchanging and exchanging, till he finds an article that he may lawfully

carry. My countryman, meantime, makes the best of his way home with a cargo of something that Brazil wants to sell and the States are ready to buy. This freedom from impediment in his traffic gives him the advantage over the Nova Scotian, as the comparative freedom of the Nova Scotian does over the Cingalese."

" And this countryman of yours, or his father, was a fellow-subject of mine. Truly, he seems better off than when we were under the same king."

" And how is your country the worse for his being no longer your fellow-subject,—for his country being no longer a British colony ? Do you buy and sell less of each other ? Do you steal one another's trade ? Does not America rather deal the more largely with you, the wider and more rapid is her traffic with the rest of the world ?"

" Your argument would go to prove that we should be better without colonies ; but what will our merchants say to our parting with markets into which we can empty our warehouses ?"

" As to being better without colonies,—we agreed just now that colonies are good things both for the natives and the settlers, while the one class wants to be civilized and the other to find a home of promise. Let this connexion be modified by circumstances as time rolls on, the child growing up into a state fit for self-government, and the mother country granting the liberty of self-government as the fitness increases. If the control be continued too long, if the colony

be not admitted to understand, and allowed to pursue its own interests, its interests must languish, and it will become a proportionate burden to the mother country. It will have only the wages of ill-paid labour; or the scanty profits of feeble speculation to exchange for the productions of the mother country, instead of a store of wealth gathered by commerce with the whole world. Which is worth the most to England at this moment, Ceylon, her servile dependency, or any province of her band of commercial allies,—our United States,—I leave your merchants to say."

" It is true, we get nothing now in taxes from your States ; but we get incalculably more as the profits of trade ; while the heavy taxation of Ceylon will not nearly pay its own expenses, and the mother country must defray the remainder."

" So much for keeping colonies for the sake of their trade. This notion involves two assumptions ; that the colony would not trade with the mother country if it were no longer a colony, and that colonial monopoly is a good to the mother country."

" The very term ' colony trade ' involves the notion of monopoly : since, if there were no monopoly, the distinction would be lost between that and any other sort of free trade."

" Well ; if the exclusive trade with the mother country be the best for the interest of the colony, the colony will continue it, after the compulsion is withdrawn. If it be not for the interest of the colony, neither can it be so for the parent ; since the interest of the seller demands the prosperity

of the customer; and the welfare of the whole demands the welfare of its component parts."

"Indeed, our colonies are too often used as a special instrument of forcing the means of production into artificial channels, to serve the selfish purposes of classes, or companies, or individuals."

"Thereby ruining the interests of these self-same classes, companies, and individuals. If any class of merchants can succeed in making themselves the only buyers of any article from a colony, or the only sellers of any article in it, they may for a time dictate their own terms to their slaves: but not for long. They may stock the market at home with precious things which they get as cheap as stones and straws in the colony; but their mutual competition will soon bring down the price to the common rate of profit. And if not,—if the merchants agree upon a price and keep to it, the colony will not long fulfil its part in this unequal bargain. A losing bargain must come to an end sooner or later; and labour being discouraged, and capital absorbed in the colony, the merchants will inevitably find their supplies fall short."

"I was going to ask," observed Mrs. Serle, "why the colony need act in such a bargain? If it had any spirit, it would refuse to traffic."

"Its power to do so depends on the nature of its supplies from the mother country. If it derives only luxuries, it may resist oppression by declining to receive the luxuries of the mother-country, and it may defy oppression by devising luxuries for itself. In these cases, the mother-

country sustains a pure loss of the trade. If the colony is dependent for necessaries, it can defy the oppressor no further than by using the smallest possible quantity. Few people discern much value in the trade of a country whose population barely lives. Such a commerce will not repay the trouble of maintaining a monopoly."

" It does seem to me, certainly, that if any compulsion is used at all, it should be to oblige the colony to sell to none but the parent. If it can buy cheaper elsewhere, so much is saved of the resources of the empire. It would be a loss to the British empire to have Ceylon buy its wine from London alone, if wine might be obtained cheaper from Madeira. The extra price which the carriage and the profits of the middlemen would demand, would be just so much withdrawn from the customer's means of production and of future purchase."

" And the case is no better when the prohibition regards selling from the colony. If the colonial article produces just the ordinary profits of stock, the purchasing country takes needless trouble in enforcing the monopoly. If less than the ordinary profits of stock, the article will cease to be produced. If more, the purchaser may feel perfectly secure of being thanked for her custom, instead of its being necessary to intrude it by force of law. All this applies as well to a trade-driving government, or an exclusive company, as to a general body of merchants ; the only difference being that such a government or company, having a more despotic power by the ab-

sence of competition, the tyranny may be consummated sooner, and the mischief wrought more effectually. Your government keeps its pearl-fishers, and your Honourable Company its spice-gatherers, impoverished more effectually than a general body of British pearl and spice merchants could have done."

" Yet the general body of merchants can carry on the work of impoverishment with tolerable vigour and success, even upon a dependency so near at hand as to have great facilities for remonstrance. In the case of Ireland, towards the close of the last century, they contrived to rivet the chains of monopoly for a few years longer, after having done wonders in beggaring the Green Island."

" They were helped by the country gentlemen there, my dear," replied Mrs. Serle, who was an English woman, " and by the manufacturers and shipowners and others. I remember how my grandfather used to talk after dinner about the ruin which would come upon us all if the Irish, —with their low wages and light taxation, were allowed to get their own sugar from the West Indies, and to pay for it with some articles of their own produce. And my uncle Joe and the curate used to agree that we were quite kind enough already to Ireland in giving her permission from year to year to send beef and butter to our colonies, and to clothe her own troops, then serving in America, with her own manufactures. The squire and the clergyman and the shop-keeper in the next village got up a petition to

parliament against letting the Irish have any more trade, lest they should spoil ours."

" And Liverpool expected to dwindle into a fishing village again, and Manchester that her deserted factories would become the abode of the owl and the bat ; and Glasgow pleaded an hereditary right to the sugar trade which Ireland must not be permitted to invade. Where this right came from it was for Glasgow to say ; but, in enforcing it, Glasgow seemed much tempted to sink audacious Ireland into the sea. It is a pity, my dear, that your grandfather did not live to see Liverpool at the present day, after ten times as much having been granted to Ireland as was then asked for. In proportion as the commerce between England and Ireland has grown into the similitude of a coasting trade, the prosperity of Liverpool and many another English town has increased, while the resources of Ireland (however deplorably cramped by bad government to this day) have steadily though slowly improved. The same fears, the same opposition, were excited, I think, Mr. Carr, when a relaxation was proposed in some departments of your Company's monopoly, and with the same results.

" Yes. There was an idea, some time ago, that nothing remained to be done in the way of traffic with India. It was thought that the private trader could find no new channels of commerce, and that India could not benefit in any way by a change."

" Can anything equal the presumption of human decisions on untried matters !" cried Mr.

Serle. "Did your Company really amply supply the whole of India with all that Hindoo hearts and Mahomedan minds could desire? Was nothing more wanted by a people who died by thousands in a year for want of salt; who fell sick by hundreds of thousands for want of clothing, habitations, and the wholesome arts of life, and who groaned by millions under privation and excessive toil? If your Company thus reported itself the faithful and wise steward, giving to the people under him meat in their season, I, for one, would have besought, in that day as in this, to have him cast out. His weeping and gnashing of teeth would have been unheard amidst the shout of joy when the door closed behind him."

"Well, but he was not cast out," said Mrs. Serle. "He was only compelled to relax his rule. Was there any rejoicing?"

"Much, very much, my dear. The direct commerce between England and India has already been more than doubled. Private traders have proved that there were still desirable articles that India had not, and that more and more became invented and wished for in proportion as people are allowed to minister to each other. I question whether any man will be again found between this and doomsday to say that India cannot want any thing more, and that there is nothing left for anybody out of the Honourable Company to do."

"The persuasion arose," observed Mr. Carr, "from the character of the people,—their wants

being so simple and few, their domestic habits and pursuits so uniform, and their resort to the productions of their own country so invariable, that they did not seem to need anything that foreigners could give."

" Shut an infant into a dungeon, and bring him out when he is twenty," said Mrs. Serle, " and, if he has never tasted anything but bread and water, he will want no other food than bread and water. If his dress has always been sacking, his ignorant choice will be of sacking still, though broadcloth be lying beside it. But have patience with him till he has tasted beef and wine, and seen every other man of twenty dressed in broadcloth, and by the time he is thirty, we shall hear no more of his simple tastes, and of his resort to primitive productions. Our ancestors, Mr. Carr, had a very simple taste for acorns of native growth: they resorted to native productions,—wolf-skins,—for clothing; their pursuits were uniform enough,—picking up acorns and hunting wolves;—they gathered round their murderous wicker deity, as the Hindoos round the pile of the suttee; and the one people venerated the mistletoe as the other glorifies cow-dung: nevertheless, here are we at this day, you dressed in broadcloth, and I in silk, and both of us philosophizing on civilization. Why should it not be the same with the Hindoo in due time?"

" And before so many hundred years as it took to civilize the Britons," observed Mr. Carr. " The exports from Great Britain to the countries east of the Cape have quadrupled since the

relaxation of the monopoly; and the difficulty now is for traders with India to find returns for the variety of goods demanded by India. Formerly, England paid in gold and silver; now we pay in iron, copper, and steel, in woollens and cottons, and in a hundred other articles, of which few Hindoos dreamed a century ago. India sends back indigo,—the best of a very few articles which may be imported into Great Britain by individuals. Whenever the day shall arrive for the Company's monopoly of China to be abolished, tea, mother-of-pearl, and nankeens, will afford a larger variety, India will make a new start in the career of civilization, and Great Britain a mighty acquisition in her foreign commercial relations."

"In all the cases you have mentioned," observed Mrs. Serle, "the restrictions have been imposed with a view to the welfare of the mother-country, and at the expense of the colony. Are there not cases of a reverse policy?"

"Many; but here, as in many cases, the reverse of wrong is not right. Whether it be attempted to enrich the parent at the expense of the child, or the child at the expense of the parent, a great folly is perpetrated, if, by letting both alone, they might enrich each other. Perhaps the most flagrant instance of this kind of impolicy is the management of the British timber trade. Your government, Mr. Carr, loads Norwegian timber with excessive duties, that the inferior timber of Canada may have the preference in the market. By this means, not only is Norway

deprived of its just right of priority, and Britain of a useful customer, but Canada is tempted to neglect some very important processes of improvement for the sake of — ”

“ Of pushing the lumber trade,” interrupted Mr. Carr. “ I am aware that the Canadians carry their felling, squaring, and floating of timber a great deal too far, to the injury of agriculture, and of the condition of the people in every way. I am aware that any depression of this artificial timber-trade, however felt by individuals, is a decided gain to the colony at large. Great Britain has, in that instance, made a sacrifice in a wrong place.”

“ And what a sacrifice ! If no partiality were shown, Great Britain might have unexceptionable timber from Norway, and from Canada a supply of the corn she so much needs, instead of the indifferent wood, from the use of which her houses and her shipping are suffering. Let her still procure wood from her colony, which may serve the inferior purposes for which its texture fits it ; but to refuse European timber, and persist in building frigates and dwelling-houses which shall hold out only half as long as they might last for the same money,—the people crying out all the while for Canadian wheat,—is a policy whose wisdom is past my comprehension.”

“ Such is generally the result, it seems to me,” observed Mrs. Serle, “ when one party is grasping, and a second self-denying, in order to exclude a third. The matter generally ends in the

injury of all three. If they would only follow the old saying, 'Live and let live,' all would do well,—all would do best."

"Where is that rule so violated as here?" said Mr. Serle, looking abroad from the verandah upon the approach of a fleet of barks with firewood, for the nightly sacrifice to the Moloch of monopoly. "Your colonial government here, Mr. Carr, manages to live,—to sustain itself by shifts and devices; but as to letting live, let the extinguished fires on the shore, and the cry of the jackal in the woods, bear their testimony."

"And your evening countenance," added his wife. "I almost dread to see you come home from visiting your neighbours."

"Mamma said yesterday," observed Alice, "that she wished Mr. Serle would stay away, unless he would look as merry as he used to do. She says—"

"My dear love, what can you be thinking of?" cried Mrs. Carr, now roused to something like energy of manner.

"She is thinking of your happy exemption from beholding the signs of suffering which are daily brought before my eyes in the pursuit of my vocation," mildly replied Mr. Serle. "But if I were to stay away till I saw nothing to make me look grave,—if I were to stay away till I saw the men grow honest, and the women cheerful, and the children comely,—till there were no struggles of poverty by day, or of death by night,—I fear we should both be grey-haired before we could meet again."

Mrs. Carr did not mean anything, by her own account; and the group were, therefore, left to ponder the full significance of the missionary's words.

CHAPTER VI.

BLITHE NEWS.

Few indeed were the places in the island where there were no struggles of poverty by day, or of death by night. In Rayo's hut, the poverty struggle seemed to be drawing near its close, and that of death impending. There needed the agency of no hag to touch the dwellers in the jungle with leprosy; no curse from above to make them feel as outcasts in their own land. The sunny days and starlight nights of the dry season were full of dreariness. Rayo, now the victim of leprosy in its most fearful form, passed the day in solitude,—now creeping from his mat to his threshold, and there finding that his swollen limbs would carry him no farther; now achieving with much toil, his daily walk in search of the honeycomb of the hollow tree, or of any windfall of the fruit he could no longer climb to reach. The pitcher-plant grew all around his hut, and regularly performed its silent service of preparing the limpid draught to satisfy his feverish longing; but the monkeys were now too strong for him;

and often, in a state of desperate thirst, he saw a pert ape, or an insolent baboon, twist the green cup from its tendril, and run up a tree with it, or upset the draught before his eyes. If ever he got far enough to look out upon the open landscape, it stirred his spirit to see the herds of buffaloes on the hill-side, and the proud vessels on the distant main, bringing luxuries from many a clime ; feeling, as he did, that the food and the wine thus exhibited to him would have preserved him from his disease, and kept Marana, in all her youth and strength, by his side. If he met a countryman, with whom to speak, his tumultuous thoughts were not calmed ; for he heard tell of the high price which cinnamon bore this season, on account of the lucky damage done by lightning to the crop. To him and his countrymen it signified little whether the Honourable Company were enabled to ask the prices of such a scarce season as this, or whether they sought from government a compensation for the loss occasioned by an over-supply ; Rayo and his countrymen had no part nor lot in the harvests of their native island ; but Rayo had in the concerns of the rulers the deep stake of unsatisfied revenge. As often as he became sensible of a new loss of strength, as often as any of the horrible symptoms of elephantiasis met his consciousness, he drew sharp and brief inferences respecting the philosophy of colonization, which might have been worthy the ear of a British parliament, if they could have been echoed so far over the sea.

Marana, meanwhile, was hurrying northwards with all the speed of which her wasted frame was capable. She pushed on eagerly by day, now in heat and now in damp, and halted unwillingly at night under the shelter of some rest-house provided for travellers of a different caste. When she looked upon the withered garlands that dangled from the corner-posts, and longed for the draperies of cotton by which healthier persons than herself had been sheltered from the night-dews, she too felt,—though of a milder and more placable nature than her husband,—that some one had stepped in between them and Providence, and turned their native paradise into a dreary wilderness. She had heard strangers marvel at the absence of singing-birds in her native glades at noon, and among the bowers of the banian, when the sinking sun peeps beneath its arches, and she had accounted for it to such marvellers, by tales of the wars between the serpent and his feathered prey; but to her it seemed strange that none should ask why the warblings of human gladness were so seldom heard in a region whence their outpourings should echo to heaven. If asked to account for this silence also, she would have told of the wily and venomous agency of monopoly, which wages war against the helpless, from generation to generation, till the music of joy is forgotten in the land.

Marana's spirits rose as she approached the northern parts of the island, and, leaving woods and hills behind her, entered upon the level and sandy region, whose aspect never changed but

as the sea, which was its boundary, was gleaming or grey, as the heavens were clear or clouded. The bare shore near her father's dwelling was above all beloved ; and she stopped for an instant to listen to the tide as it made itself heard above her throbbing pulses, before she stole across the well-known threshold.

The cottage looked as it used to look, except that there were no remains of the household decorations which the neat-handed love to prepare in countries where decoration requires no expenditure but of skill. Her mother-of-pearl shells, her embroidery of fish-bones, her tufts of many-coloured sea-weed, had disappeared ; and instead of these, there were more snake skins, a new set of sharks' fins, and a larger variety of inexplicable charms. Her father slept upon his mat, a ray of moonlight falling across his brow from a chink in the frail roof of his cottage.

Marana was afraid to waken and alarm him while there was no more light than this in the cottage. She refrained till she had caught a handful of fire-flies, and fixed them in her hair, —there being no sign of fire in any neighbouring cottage. This done, she bent over the Charmer, and charmed away his sleep. He gazed at her long ; and, common as was the sight of his dark countrywomen crowned with a green flame, the figure before him was so like one which he had often expected to see in vision, that the repeated sound of her voice was necessary to assure him that it was indeed his daughter.

“ You are flying before Amootra, my child,

or she has already laid her hand upon you. Not the less shall your head rest on my bosom."

Before she could rest, Marana said, she must confess her impiety in parting with her charm, and obtain another. She sorely repented having sold the chank. The gold it brought was presently consumed; and what was gold in a country where it could not be made to reproduce itself, or answer any purpose beyond delaying want for a time? She would take any vow Father Anthony should prescribe, not to part with any other charm.

"Father Anthony will tell you," replied her father, with a smile, "that it is better to grow and sell cinnamon than to get a charm blessed, and then part with it."

Marana prayed her father not to mock her,—not to speak of forbidden traffic to one who was deep in sin already. She was told in reply that growing cinnamon was not one of the crimes on which the heavens frown, but an act which the will of man makes innocent or guilty. It was now the will of man to pronounce it innocent, and every man in Ceylon might have his cinnamon garden, and go unharmed by the powers of the earth or of the air.

But how had this miracle taken place? And was it so with pearls?

"The pearl banks are still sacred, my child; but, as for the spice, it is no miracle that the owners are tired of their losses. Much gold must they pay to the Challias, and much more must they risk on the seas; and when the spice

is landed in their own country, the buyers complain that any thing that grows upon a common tree should be worth so much. Three years since, even the rich would not buy half that was prepared, though much was burned, as usual. Then the king gave up some of his share of the price, and immediately there were three eaters of cinnamon where there was one before ; and, instead of the king losing, the people gained by more of them being able to consume the spice. What wonder, after this, if more cinnamon is permitted to be grown, that more may eat, and more grow rich by selling it ? ”

“ But who will buy it of us, father ? ”

“ Come and see, at the next fishery. Any man of whatever nation, who wishes to buy of you, may do it in the open market, and no punishment shall follow to him or you.”

“ And if Rayo had a boat, father, and carried spice to any ships he might meet upon the sea, would not that be a crime ? ”

“ A crime no longer, Marana. He may take dollars from the Spaniard, and silk from the Italian, and cotton from the Englishman, and iron from the Russian, and grain from the American, and no one will ask him how he got his wealth, or threaten those who exchange with him. I will go with you, and plant and bless your first shrub with my own hands.”

“ Rayo’s hands are too feeble to dig, and he cannot kneel for your blessing,” observed Marana, mournfully. “ Will there be any more burning of cinnamon, father ? ”

"Never more till all people in every land shall have had their fill, and the cinnamon twigs with which we light our fires shall be used unbarked through their abundance. Why should there be destruction of any good thing when the many are to decide what price they will give, instead of the few what price they will take?"

This was the best news Marana had yet heard, and her father had no more to tell. While he was moving about, preparing for the exercise of his art, and leaving his mat for his daughter's repose, he told of poverty and sickness among his neighbours, to whom it mattered not whether the fishery proved a rich or a ruinous one. In the former case, they derived none of the benefits; in the latter, they could scarcely be starved down to a lower point than they were sure to reach in the intervals of the seasons. His representations were confirmed to Marana when she went abroad in the morning to seek Father Anthony, and accost any friends she might meet by the way.

Old Gomgode, her father-in-law, lay on the beach, glancing about him with his restless eyes for something to feed his inquisitiveness. There was no inducement at present to go to sea in search of curiosities, there being no fair at this season, and none of his neighbours being wealthy enough to make purchases when each had no thing to do but to secure his own scanty provision for the day. Gomgode's sole employment was asking questions of any one he could meet, and longing for the sight of an unaccustomed face.

He started up as he recognized Marana's form, though wasted, and her gait, though feeble and spiritless. When he had asked a multitude of questions,—where was Rayo? how was Rayo? why did not Rayo come? and so forth, he was struck dumb by the tidings of his son's afflictions. He silently pointed to the cottage where Neyna, his daughter, might be found, and lay down on his face to importune the saints with prayers for his children;—for Neyna, who was awaiting a dowry he could not earn for her; for Marana, who was likely to be a widow before she was a mother; and for the sufferer who was pining in his distant solitude.—Before his prayers were ended, Father Anthony had joined him, and was uniting in his intercessions when the young women appeared to ask the priest's blessing.

Marana had not found Neyna in the cottage, but bathing with her companions in a reedy pool behind the dwellings. There was something left among these maidens of the sportiveness which seems to belong to the most refreshing exercise of bathing, and which was Marana's wont in her younger days. There was now a song and now a laugh; now a conspiracy to empty all the waterpots at once on the head of one, and then the chace of a dusky beauty among the rushes,—of Neyna, who had forgotten for the moment her hopelessness of a dowry. She was startled by the apparition of a stranger, intercepting her with outstretched arms in her flight, and recovered her gravity at the first recognition of Marana's faint smile. The other girls wrung out

their dripping hair, and came up from the water to crowd round their old companion, to ask tidings of the rich land to the south, where, if there were no pearl-banks, there was every other wealth of nature; where, as the songs of their dancing-girls told them, life under the cocoanut trees was all that could be desired; where thousands of yards of cotton might be had from abroad, and hundreds of thousands of bags of rice were landed from foreign fleets. Marana pointed to her tattered garment, and let fall that it was long since she had tasted rice.

Why did she not seek relief from the English? she was asked. Did not the English come to provide for and protect the natives? Had not the English cotton enough to tapestry Adam's Peak, and could not they purchase the rice grounds of the globe?

"We," said they, "are too far off from this fountain of wealth and mercy. The English come for our pearls once a year, and then they see us gay, and observe that our shore is spread with wealth. They do not know how little of this wealth is ours, or suspect what our hunger and nakedness are when they withdraw the light of their faces. But you live in that light, and yet you are wasted and sorrowful."

"The English themselves complain," answered Marana. "When there is a bad cinnamon harvest, the Government complains that the richer of our countrymen pay no dues, and that feeding the poor is a costly burden. When there is a good cinnamon harvest, the Company complains

of the abundance, and burns half the crop ; so that the strangers are always complaining, and the labourers of the country are always poor. This is the way with us in the south."

" And with us in the north. Why then did the English come ? And why now do they not go away ? "

This question was too puzzling for any maiden of them all to answer, and they hastened to refer it to Father Anthony.

" Would you have me go away ? " inquired he, smiling. " Shall I set the example to my countrymen, and leave you to your woods and waters in peace ? "

" You do not forbid our fishing in our waters ; you do not bark and burn our woods ; you do not live upon our wealth, paying us only a pittance for getting it for you. Why, therefore, should you go ? "

" My children, you speak as if the English settlers were thieves. You speak as if it was nothing to have wise and skilful strangers come to teach you the arts of life. You speak as if you forgot the protection afforded to you by the government of the mother country, and the expense incurred by her for your support."

" Who is it that robs us, not only of our spice and our pearls, but of all that many another country would give us for our spice and our pearls, if it be not the English ? " cried one.

" Are we the happier for their wisdom and their skill ? " cried another. " And as for the arts of life, do we need strangers to teach us

to lie beneath the fig-tree, and sleep away our hunger?"

"From what do they protect us?" asked a third. "If they will go away, we will protect ourselves against their returning; and our own expenses we can bear as soon as ships from every land may come to trade on our shores."

Father Anthony reminded them of the social institutions which had been established among them, with the entire good-will of the natives: but his pupils were obstinate in the opinion that slavery could not be said to be abolished while labourers were dependent for daily bread on the arbitrary will of a monopolizing party; and that, excellent as was trial by jury, the prevention of the manifold crimes which spring from oppression would be still better.

"If the English were to withdraw their protection," said Father Anthony, "would you forbid them your shores?"

"They should be more welcome than they have ever been yet," declared the old fisherman. "Let them land here, and we will spread white cloth for them to tread upon, and carry them on our shoulders to Columbo. If they will buy our pearls, the Dutchman, and the Frenchman, and the Spaniard shall all stand back till the English are served, and the money that we shall receive in our fairs and our markets shall buy the merchandise that comes from Britain. We have dealt with the English so long, that we would deal with them rather than with people of strange

tongues and ways, if they would but traffic as fairly as other people."

" Why, then, should the English go? Why should they not live in the houses they have themselves built, and walk in the gardens they themselves have planted? "

" Let them do so—the merchant, and the priest, and the judge, and the labourer—if there be British labourers here. Of these we can make countrymen and friends. But we do not wish for rulers, if they make us poor, and so tempt us to wickedness. We do not wish for soldiers, if we must give our daughters' dowries to maintain them. And as for the government agent, who takes our pearls, and the Company, that forbid us to grow cinnamon for anybody but themselves, if they will go, we will work hard, and soon make a beautiful ship to carry them away."

" Then it is not the English you object to, but some of their conduct towards you? Let us hope that the time will come when you will live together, not quarrelling for the possession of what Providence has given to all, but finding that there is enough for all."

" Why do not the wise English see this? "

" Many of them do. The wisest of the English see that there is little honour or advantage in calling any colony a possession of her own, if it would bring her profit instead of loss by being her friend, instead of her servant. The wisest among the English see, that to make a colony poor is to make it unprofitable, and that colo-

nies cannot be very rich while they are dependent. To protect and cherish a colony till it can take care of itself, is wise and kind ; but to prevent its taking care of itself, is folly and crime. It is as if every man here should keep his grown up son in the bondage of childhood. Such fathers and such sons can never be prosperous and virtuous."

" Who prevents the wise among the English from acting wisely ? "

" Some who are not so wise. Though it may be clear that all England and all Ceylon would be more prosperous if the trade of Ceylon were free, some few would cease to make gains which they will not forego. Some hope that their sons may be made soldiers, if there should be a war in the colony, and others expect that a brother or a cousin may be a judge, or a priest, or a servant of the government."

" But there cannot be many such."

" Very few ; but those few have been enough to burden England with expensive colonies up to this day. They are few, but they are powerful, because the many do not know what a grievance they are submitting to. The selfish are few ; but it does not follow that all others are wise, or England would leave off maintaining colonies expensively for the sake of their trade, when she would trade more profitably with them free."

" Why do the people not know this ? "

" It is strange that they do not bestir themselves, and look abroad, and judge."

" Where should they look ? "

“ To the east or to the west, as they please. In the east they may see how their trade has been more than twice doubled since they have allowed some little freedom of traffic ; and they are told every year how expensive is this island, where no trade is free. They might know that, with the greatest natural wealth, this island is among the least profitable of their colonies. They might know that its total revenue does not pay its expenses, and that no making shifts, no gathering in of money from all quarters, can prevent its being a burden to them and to their children, if they persevere in their present management.”

“ And what may they learn by looking westward ? ”

“ That the States of America are a source of much greater wealth and power to Great Britain now than when she had a ruler in each of them. She is saved the expense of governing at a great distance, and has more trade with America than when she called it her own. Also, the colonies that she still holds in the west are an enormous expense to her—as fearful a burden as America is an advantage. Besides the loss which the mother country incurs for the sake of the colonies, (and which loss does those very colonies nothing but harm,) there is a direct expenditure of upwards of a million and a half in time of peace, for the apparatus of defence alone. How much more there is laid out in times of war, and in the necessary expenses of a government far from home, the people of England can never

have considered, or they would long ago have permitted, ay, encouraged, Canada and Jamaica to govern themselves."

"If the English will but let us take care of ourselves, they may, perhaps, learn a new lesson about the places in the west."

"I am happy to tell you that a beginning is already made. There is only one among you—your father, Marana—to whom I have yet told the news. Every man may now plant cinnamon in his garden, and sell it to whomsoever he pleases. The news will not be long in flying round the world, and then more and more will ask for cinnamon continually; your countrymen will grow a greater quantity, and obtain a larger variety of comforts in exchange."

"Then you will have to preach to us as they say you preach to the strangers,—against gay dresses, and rich food, and too much love of gold," said the old man, chuckling.

"And if so, less against theft, and fraud, and hypocrisy, and indolence," replied the priest. "There will be little stealing of chanks when all may fish them; little false bargaining when bargains shall have opportunity to become fair; little pretence of penitence hiding a mocking heart, when there is room for real thankfulness, and for a sense of ingratititude to a bountiful God; and much more industry when the rewards of industry are within reach. However true it may be that mortal men sin while they are mortal men, it is certain that they change their sins

with their outward state, and change them for the better as their state improves."

"Some tempters from above must be worse than others, I suppose," said Gomgode; "but it is surprising to think that our rulers have power to send away the worst, that some less bad may come in."

Marana hoped that her husband might benefit by the change. If his elephantiasis could but turn into some disease less dreadful, how would she bless the relaxation of the cinnamon monopoly!

Father Anthony could not encourage his dear daughter to look for such a result as this. But there were no bounds to the mercy of God towards one who repented,—as it was to be hoped Rayo did. Father Anthony would journey southwards with Marana and her father, to visit and console and pray with his unhappy charge, Rayo. He was ready at any moment to set forth.

Marana's ecstacies of gratitude and joy were checked only by the fear of what spectacle might meet her in her hut on her return, and by the mournful farewells of Neyna and her young companions, to whom no immediate prospect of a dowry was opened by the new change of policy. They regarded Marana as about to enter a land of promise whither they would fain follow her; unless, indeed, some similarly precious permission respecting the pearl banks should arrive, and convert their dreary shore

into a region of hope and activity. They silently received their priest's parting blessing and injunctions as to their duties during his absence, and then watched him on his way. Setting forth laboriously on his mission of charity, he looked, indeed, little like one of the intruding strangers whom they had been taught to wish far from their shores.

CHAPTER VII

UP AND DOING.

MARANA scarcely knew what to hope or fear when she had cast the first hasty glance round the hut in which she expected to find her husband. Rayo was not there, and she dreaded to inquire where he was; whether his ashes had been given to the winds, or whether some of these winds had brought him vigour to go abroad into the neighbouring wood. All the way as she came, sights and sounds of pleasure had been presented to her, and she had endeavoured to share the satisfaction of the priest and of her father at seeing the bustle of the country people in clearing their ground for the growth of the long-forbidden shrub; and the joyous parties returning from the thickets with the young plants which, when improved by cultivation, were to form the foundation of their

wealth; and the dancing girls spreading the news through the land. She had striven to thank her saint with the due devotion when Father Anthony spread the blessing around him as he travelled; but the dread of what might be awaiting her at home had borne down her spirits. A circumstance which had occurred the day before had alarmed her grievously at the moment, and now explained only too clearly, she apprehended, the deserted state of the hut. She had stolen out early to bathe, and when she came up out of the water, she found that a thievish bird was flying away with her necklace, the symbol of her married state. It was true that a shout from her father had caused the necklace to be dropped, and that it was at this moment safe; but was not the pang which shot through her yesterday prophetic of the worse pangs of to-day? Whether her father believed that his spells could bring back a departed spirit, he did not declare; but he now hastened to utter them on the threshold; while Marana flitted about the hut, taking up first the empty cocoa-nut from the floor, then the dry skin which was wont to hold oil, and then the mat on which it was impossible to tell by the mere examination whether any one had slept on the preceding night.

While she was sinking, at length, in utter inability to inquire further, the priest, who had walked a little way into the jungle on seeing that nothing was to be learned within doors, approached the entrance with a smile on his countenance. No one thought of waiting till

the charm was ended. The three went forth; and, not far off, in an open space to which sunshine and air were admitted, appeared a group of people, whose voices sounded cheerily in the evening calm.

Mr. Carr was on horseback, with Alice before him, watching the proceedings of the others. Mr. Serle was digging a hole in the newly prepared soil, while Rayo stood by, holding the young cinnamon shrub which was about to be planted. Mrs. Serle was busy, at some distance, training the pepper-vine against the garden fence.

“Stop, stop!” cried the broken voice of the Charmer; “I have a vow, Rayo,—a vow! I have vowed to plant and bless the first cinnamon shrub in your garden.”

“And my blessing is yours, my son,” added Father Anthony.

“And mine has been given already,” observed the missionary, smiling.

“When was ever any property of your Honourable Company so hallowed?” Mrs. Serle inquired of Mr. Carr, with a smile, as she turned away to avoid seeing the meeting of Rayo and Marana.

“Property is sacred in the eye of God and man,” replied Mr. Carr, gravely.

“So it has been ever agreed between God and man,” said Mrs. Serle. “Therefore, whenever that which is called property is extensively desecrated, the inevitable conclusion is that it is not really property. The time will never come when

this island will rise up against Rayo's cinnamon plantation, even if it should spread, by gradual and honourable increase, to the sea on one side, and to Candy on the other. As long as it prospers by means which interfere with no one's rights, Rayo's property will be sacred in the eyes of his country. But the whole island has long risen against your monopoly gardens. There have been not only curses breathed within its shade, and beyond its bounds, but pilfering, and burning, and studious waste."

"I think it is a pity, papa," said Alice, "that the Company did not get a Charmer to charm the great garden at the beginning, and a Catholic priest to give it a blessing, and then it would have been as safe as Rayo's is to be."

"Nonsense, my dear," was Mr. Carr's reply. He was full of trouble at the responsibility which would fall upon him if the opening of the cinnamon trade should prove a disaster.

"The same charm and blessing will not suit, I believe, Alice," replied Mrs. Serle. "The charm is, in fact, against hopeless poverty and its attendant miseries,—a lot which the Honourable Company has never had to fear. The blessing is, in fact, on the exchange of fraud and hypocrisy—the vices which spring from oppression,—for honesty,—the virtue which grows up where labour is left free to find its recompense. The Honourable Company——"

"Has never found its recompense, in this instance, I am sure," said Mr. Carr. "We are heartily tired of our bargain; and not all that

we have obtained from Government, from time to time, to compensate for fluctuations, has prevented our losing very seriously from our cinnamon trade. We have been thoroughly disappointed in our markets, and cannot open any fresh ones. I hope now—”

“ O, yes ! You will do well enough now, if you will manage your concerns as economically as private traders, and put yourselves on equal terms with the people of the country. There can be no lack of a market when it is once known that every one may sell and every one buy that which every body likes.”

“ I believe so ; and that there will henceforth be no such considerable fluctuations as there have been while there were fewer parties interested in checking and balancing each other. Still,—convinced as I am that we have done wisely in abolishing this monopoly,—I cannot but feel it to be a serious thing to witness so vigorous a preparation for supplying the new demand.”

“ It is indeed a serious thing to see a new era established among a people to whom we stand in the relation of a secondary Providence. It is a serious thing to have the power of lifting up the impotent who have long lain hopeless at this beautiful gate of God’s temple, and to see them instantly paying the homage of activity and joy. But this is surely not the moment to distrust the exercise of their new strength, and to fear its consequences.”

“ Will poor Rayo ever be able to walk like

other people, do you think, papa?" inquired Alice.

Mr. Carr had no hope of cure ; but it was not an uncommon thing for the victims of this disease to live on for many years, without much pain, if well fed and taken care of. So great a change had already taken place in Rayo since something had been given him to do and to hope for, that it seemed very probable that he might revive much further, and prune his own vines, and bark his own shrubs for many a season to come. He must be assisted to erect a cottage on the dry soil of his new garden, instead of remaining in the damp nook which had been the home of his poverty. He must be assisted to obtain wholesome food till the next cinnamon harvest, after which it might be hoped that he would be able first to supply his simple wants, and then to afford to let them become more complex.

" He is gone to confession with the priest," observed Mrs. Serle, as she watched the two proceeding towards the hut, while Marana's beads hung from her hand. " Henceforth, Mr. Carr, let Rayo's sins be his own : but I think the Honourable Company can hardly refuse to take his past offences on themselves, however long they have made him bear the penalty."

" Certainly, if we strike out of the catalogue of crimes," said Mr. Carr, " all that are originated by institutions, and by social customs, against which an individual can do no more than

protest, but few will remain for which any Christian priest will dare to prescribe individual penance. If the heads of colonial governments at home were fully and perpetually aware of this, under what solemn emotions would they step into their office!"

Perhaps Father Anthony was such a Christian priest as Mr. Carr had just spoken of, for he returned from hearing Rayo's confession with a countenance full of mildness, and a voice full of pity. Marana no longer detected under her husband's submissive manner the workings of passion which had often terrified her ; and, in addition to this, and to the decided improvement she witnessed in his health, she had the satisfaction of learning from her father that he had so far recovered his confidence in his own spells that he was sure the charmed shrub would prosper, and would avail better to make Amootra keep her distance than any chank in the Indian seas.

The rest of the party were about to go in search of rice or other good food. They had been too much struck by their accidental meeting with Rayo in the wood,—too deeply touched by witnessing his feeble attempts to pluck up the cinnamon suckers,—to think of leaving him to his own resources in his present state of health. As they were quitting the enclosure, and looked back to see how the slanting sunbeams lit up the eyes of the care-worn family, the two priests of a religion of promise assured one another that the time was at hand when here every man should sit under his vine and his fig-tree, and none should make him afraid.

Summary of Principles illustrated in this Volume.

Colonies are advantageous to the mother-country as affording places of settlement for her emigrating members, and opening markets where her merchants will always have the preference over those of other countries, from identity of language and usages.

Colonies are not advantageous to the mother-country as the basis of a peculiar trade.

The term 'colony trade' involves the idea of monopoly; since, in a free trade, a colony bears the same relation as any other party to the mother-country.

Such monopoly is disadvantageous to the mother-country, whether possessed by the government, as a trading party, by an exclusive company, or by all the merchants of the mother-country.

It is disadvantageous as impairing the resources of the dependency, which are a part of the resources of the empire, and the very material of the trade which is the object of desire.

If a colony is forbidden to buy of any but the mother-country, it must do without some articles which it desires, or pay dear for them;—it loses the opportunity of an advantageous exchange, or makes a disadvantageous one. Thus the resources of the colony are wasted.

If a colony is forbidden to sell its own produce

to any but the mother-country, either the prohibition is not needed, or the colony receives less in exchange from the mother-country than it might obtain elsewhere. Thus, again, the resources of the colony are wasted.

If a colony is forbidden either to buy of or sell to any but the mother-country, the resources of the colony are wasted according to both the above methods, and the colony is condemned to remain a poor customer and an expensive dependency.

In proportion, therefore, as trade with colonies is distinguished from trade with other places, by restriction on buyers at home, or on sellers in the colonies, that trade (involving the apparatus of restriction) becomes an occasion of loss instead of gain to the empire.

